The BIG HOUSE

JACK LAIT

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A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. *The Big House.*

THE HAPPY REUNION OF MORGAN AND ANNE.

The
BIG HOUSE

BY

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BASED ON THE
MOTION PICTURE SCENARIO BY

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AND

GEORGE HILL

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THE BIG HOUSE

CHAPTER I

One evening, some twenty-eight months before the penitentiary gates opened before and closed behind Dean Ward Kent, there was admitted a good-looking young chap whose darkly passionate nature betrayed itself in the full, low tones of his voice and deep-set, brooding eyes; one who could be generous or vicious, just or cruel, capable of loyalty, larceny, lechery, or treachery. He said his name was Duncan Morgan.

Morgan had "tripped" up the river on a "garter," which means he was serving a third conviction under an indeterminate sentence. Five to fifteen years, the judge had decreed—a "stretch" that the convicts call a "taxi," because most New York cabs bear conspicuously their rates, and are known as "fifteen-and-fives." What portion of it Morgan would "do" depended on many factors: good behavior, outside drag, restoration of stolen

money, how the judge and the prosecutor felt disposed on the day when they would be asked to sign an agreement for parole, and how the Prison Board of Pardons had enjoyed breakfast on the day when the petition reached them for decision and action.

Morgan was eligible to a hearing for release with reservations after less than three and one-half years' incarceration. So he was in his final stage as a prisoner. There are three stages during the life of each term less than life or execution: First, the dumb, numb despair, the agonizing hopeless helplessness; then the lethargic intermediary, when the man is hardened to the monotony and nonentity and brutality of the day-in-day-after routine; then the springy realization that most of it is behind, a faint ray of light ahead, the approach of release and sunshine and liberty and living.

Morgan was a robber. He had once been a bank clerk. At fifty-five dollars a month, with snappy habits and easy ways with women, he had need for quick cash. Beside him, in his cage, lay a loaded revolver. He had but to slip it into his pocket. His first "trick" was shamefully easy. A married man on his way

home from a rendezvous with a girl—one step out of a dark doorway and the sharp bark, "Stick 'em up," had yielded Morgan several hundred dollars in currency and had cut half a dozen years of potential life from the allotment of the petrified victim with his high blood pressure.

Morgan was nailed a few months later. A flat-footed, round-headed "harness bull"—a uniformed policeman—came upon him in the act and was too dumb to be afraid. They "settled" the young, gentlemanly chap lightly, as a first offender, and for attempted robbery, because he hadn't been given time to complete the deed. No former robberies were fixed against him. But he went up, and when he came down he was an ex-con, with a record, finger-prints and some advanced ideas.

Any sap can be a holdup man. He can work alone and all the equipment he needs is a nickel-plated mail-order revolver that would probably burst in his hand if it ever went off, and a spot outside the range of the big street lights. But he takes his life and his liberty in his hands and risks all that on the chance that even if he gets by and gets away his gross

profits may be very skinny. That type of marauder is regarded as a scavenger among self-respecting thieves.

Morgan had found that out when first he bragged to his buddies behind the walls and bars that he was a "robber." They let him in on what the word meant—one of a scientific band, which laid out big takes and never took chances where the price wasn't attractive—which blueprinted and surveyed and plotted the scene of a big pay-roll "touch" or a money-wagon haul, stationed its crew, prearranged its get-away, trained its members as experts along modern lines of specialized concentration and organized coördination.

Morgan knew where to hook up with such an outfit. It wasn't easy, for such gangs are meticulous, suspicious, and exclusive. But his "front" was the feature that "sold" him. He would do as a "stall"—a contact man, an advance investigator, a wormer-in who could land secrets about movements of loot. With his personality and appearance he was a perfect pick. He prospered until one of the gang, in a forbidden confidence to an infatuated dance-hall-hostess sweetie, whispered in the night how clever and brave and wicked he was,

and spilled the works. Of course, in time, he tired of her, and of course she told another girl; the other girl happened to be "stooling" for a police lieutenant, and Morgan and the whole "mob" were "rapped."

This time our handsome chap served more than two years. A clumsy skid on the first job he tried after he was out ran the machine smack into a milk wagon, and the pursuing police had him again. This organization had "connections," and thus Morgan's "five to fifteen" was soft. It might as well have been five to fifty—the minimum was what counted; it meant that he could be free in thirty-nine months, which meant he would be free in thirty-nine months, for it was politically "in the bag." The judge's pronouncement thundered and sounded harsh and severe; but there was a smile on Morgan's face. Thirty-nine months? He could do that standing on one foot.

In this year of our Lord's grace, 1930, in these United States of inspired birth from sanctified seed, there are to-day some 700,000 men and women behind bars, roughly speaking—and that speaks roughly enough. This number takes in convicts expiating sentences in penitentiaries, reformatories and houses of

correction, and those awaiting trial on every charge from drunk and disorderly to murder, in the local jails.

A literature has grown up about the entombed. A language of their own has evolved through the decades, speaking their bitter frivolities and their ironic philosophies. Picturesque argot, much of it, for these birds have imaginations, or they wouldn't be where they are, and they have time to think, and they have pain to picture and they have a sense of humor after the primary stage.

Thus—a penitentiary is the "stir" or "the big house," a charge is a "rap" or a "jam," a lawyer is a "mouthpiece," a release is to be "sprung," a parole is a "rain check," a sentence is a "bit" or a "stretch," a life sentence is "the book" or "from now on," a five-year sentence is a "handful," a ten-year sentence is a "ten spot," a two-year sentence is a "deuce," an indeterminate sentence is a "garter," a first-timer is a "stooge," an electrocution is a "hot squat," a hanging is a "floorless dance," a guard is a "screw," an informer is a "fink," prison food is "slum," a steel bar is a "slat," a cell is a "coffin," a solitary confinement cell is "the hole," a death

cell is "hell's vestibule," a trusty is a "fido," a warden is "the collie," a physician is a "croaker," a chaplain is a "hymn hustler," and a judge is anything you can think but can't print.

A thief is a "gun" (nothing to do with a shooting weapon, but adapted from the Yiddish for a thief, "gunnif"), a forger is a "paper hanger," a counterfeiter is a "queer shover," a bank robber is a "yegg," a burglar is a "wolf" (prowler), a swindler is a "silk," a confidence (or "con") man is a "T.B.," ("con" is short and slang for consumption, and "T.B." is ditto for tuberculosis), a holdup man is a "gat goose" ("gat," of course, means a revolver), a pickpocket is a "dip," a shoplifter is a "booster," a card or dice cheater is a "grifter," a murderer is a "tocker" (because the heart is a "ticker," therefore says "ticktock," therefore the murderer had made it say its last), and anyone sentenced for a crime not for profit—social, sexual, statutory, impulsive —is a "foreigner."

"Foreigners" have low standing in prisons, where professional criminals snub and bully them. For even among these wretched ones, indeed, over all among these, there are demar-

cations of snobbery by caste and station. No matter how low humans may fall, they never lose their competitive ego, their retching for an atom of superiority over a fellow. The "heavier" the crime, the loftier the rating.

Dean Ward Kent was a "foreigner."

New Year's Eve! The town is tipsy before dinner, drunk by eleven, cockeyed when the maudlin din breaks through the unseen veil between the years, plastered as the hours ripsnort on to punctuate and celebrate the dubious rejoicement that the world has made scrap of another calendar.

No place is hot enough now to hold the more restless roisterers. They have ants in their pants. They must go. Go where? Anywhere. Go places and do things. Go little places and do big things. They have paid and lied and wire-pulled and smeared to get reservations in one giddy café or effervescent cabaret. Now they must tour. And Dean Ward Kent has a mercurial souse on. Anne Marlowe, the virginal ash blonde with him, half urges him to stay where they are with Art Manners and his girl friend, Alda Hayfer, who filled the four-

some required for a table that night at the Krazy Kamel. But Kent slobbers off and waves aside all protest.

"C'mon," he blithers, "'s New Yearsh—going to the Flaming Furnash—zippiesht jazz in 'e worl' . . . heigh-ho-le'sh *go!*"

His sedan is parked a block and a half away. They make it, Kent staggering.

"Think you can drive okay?" asks Manners.

"Huh! Who? Me? Shay, when I'm half cocked I'm the besht li'l driver 'at ever burned up the Rock'feller—tumble in, you shtewsh—when li'l ol' Kenty's at the wheel, you *get* there."

He starts her up, all right. A lever grinds into gear, and off they go. No careening. Kent drives swiftly, but surely. Through the traffic-twisted blocks, past hundreds of other cars tooting horns, stepping. Into the park, for the Flaming Furnace is up in the black belt. Kent lets her out. He crosses several roads without misadventure.

Now on the main up-and-down parkway, he jams his foot against the accelerator.

"Not so fast, Dean," whispers Anne, as she places a hand on his arm.

"Don' worry, woman," he laughs. "Kenty knowsh besht——"

He turns his head to poke a kiss at her cheek. He laughs clownishly the while.

"Look out!" yells Art piercingly.

Kent throws up his face. With a mad grab he yanks back the emergency brake.

"Oh, my God!" breathes Anne.

Kent's car hits a heavy limousine a side-swipe blow as it tries to stand on its nose and half skids into the rear end of the other machine, which has swerved past Kent's radiator to turn up a road to the left. There is a crash, and then a grinding, ripping, tearing, splintering rasp. The limousine teeters on one wheel for an instant, then goes over on its side in a pandemonium of shattering glass and crunching, cracking metal.

The four are pitched forward, Anne into the windshield, Kent against the wheel with his chest caved in. Manners, alone, is practically uninjured. He reaches first for Alda. The torn side of the car is bent half around her. She is in a limp heap, all blood, unconscious. She got the brunt of the smash.

A policeman comes on the run. Two more,

in a department flivver, are hurrying over. They look first into the upset limousine. There, senseless, are an elderly couple in evening clothes and a chauffeur in uniform. One of the cops rushes off to call ambulances. A motorcycle patrolman comes shrieking and screeching up. He opens the right-hand door of Kent's car. He plays his flashlight on the inside. Anne is moaning, her face and shoulders all cut up. Kent is completely out, his hands still on the wheel. Manners, shaky and chattering, says:

"P-pretty bad b-bump, I guess."

The mountie doesn't answer. He walks around, tears open the door at Kent's side, smells the driver's breath.

"Thought so—ossified!"

"For God's sake, officer," blubbers Manners, "tear that away from this girl—she's hurt—bad!"

The policeman gets a tool from his motorcycle and strains at the warped body-metal of the car imprisoning and piercing Alda. He frees her, takes her by the wrist. He holds it, then puts his head on her breast. He keeps it there, lifts it an inch, puts it back again, holds

it some more. He raises his head, takes off his cap, raises his eyes on high, and hoarsely utters:

"God have mercy on her soul!"

"No!" cries Manners, hysterically. "No!"

"Gone," the man in blue says, solemnly. "Dead!"

The jury files in after deliberating for eleven heart-wrenching hours. Kent jerks up spasmodically. Anne, seated back in the spectators' section, strains forward. Her face still bears the unhealed evidences of what the jury has been weighing. Beside her, Art Manners, who can never forgive the death of his sweetheart, mutters something. Anne puts her hand on his, lightly, and whispers:

"What good can that do? It won't bring Alda back. He didn't mean——"

"Gentlemen," says the court, "have you arrived at a verdict?"

The foreman, a retail shoe dealer, honest, earnest and shaking under the tension of what he has had to do and what he has yet to do, clears his throat and answers:

"We have, your honor—we——"

"Have you found a verdict?"

"We have, your honor."

"Pronounce it."

The bloodshot eyes of Dean Kent are burning him.

"Guilty!" he says, loud and clear, "of manslaughter."

Kent chokes back a sob. He hangs to the arms of his maplewood chair. His lawyer is up on his feet. He is making a motion. The judge scarcely hears him out.

"Denied," he says, without a down glance. Turning to the jury, he says, "Thank you. You are dismissed." To the lawyer he says, "I will entertain a motion for appeal after sentence—let me see"—(he consults his schedule on a form)—"next Tuesday morning at eleven. . . . Clerk, bond canceled on the defendant; bailiff, take him in custody and confine him in jail. . . . Court adjourned."

Kent can scarcely get up. His half-healed injuries, the breaking of the horrible suspense, the calamitous verdict—he is dizzy, his feet cannot find the floor. Anne comes forward to attempt a word of sympathy, courage. An attendant bars her with stiff, horizontal arm. Kent is led through the back door.

Tears trickle down Anne's cheeks and are salt in their wounds.

She has never deeply loved Kent. But now she sympathizes with him profoundly. She cannot bring herself to see him as a criminal, she who almost paid with her life for his drunken recklessness, she who had urged him against it. That is all over now. He is still a boy, in his early twenties. Life had so much to give him and to promise him until that one deadly second of that fateful night of whoopee. He should be punished, yes—but not—not as she hears the judge, on that next Tuesday morning pronounce the judgment of the state:

"Stand up, young man. . . . You have been found guilty of a heinous felony. By your rash act, you have caused the death of two persons and dangerously hurt five others . . . it was not your intent, I am sure . . . but it is an ancient principle of the law that drunkenness is no excuse for breaking the law; in fact, it is now breaking the law to be drunk. . . . Human life and limbs are as precious on New Year's Eve as at any other time. . . . There has been an epidemic of criminal driving by intoxicated persons in this community. . . . It can be halted only by severe penalties. . . .

Yours is an especially atrocious example; you, an intelligent, well-bred, successful young man, a college graduate and gifted with so many of this world's blessings. . . . In accord with the verdict of the jury, a just and sound finding, I therefore sentence you to seven years' imprisonment in the state penitentiary."

And that was how and why, his flimsy appeal scornfully thrown out by the higher jurisdiction, Dean Ward Kent arrived at the big house with a "natural" staring him in the face, for that is what the crap-shooting inmates call a seven-year "stretch."

CHAPTER II

"HERE y'are, Kid . . . at the Big House!"

The deputy's tone was as impersonal and businesslike as that of a subway guard at the end of the line. But to Dean Kent the words sounded as though shouted by a shrouded, funereal figure at the Gates of Despair.

They tumbled on his eardrums and ratcheted into his brain and knocked from the pedestal of reason that last vestige of desperate hope which had lingered even after the judge had jiggled the dice box of justice and thrown for him a "natural"; even after the deputies had come and taken him away on the train; even after they had pushed him into the drab, forbidding "Black Maria" which met him at the station.

He had felt through all that, it could not be. Something must happen. He would never go to prison. Not Dean Kent. It was all an ac-

cident from the start—the crash, the arrest, the swift trial, the sentence, the train ride, the— No, it could not be! Yet—here before him were the huge, massive walls of the state prison. Silhouetted against the evening sky was the solitary figure of a tower guard beside a machine gun. The great, steel gates of the prison ground and grunted open. The van entered. Dean Kent felt a sharp tug at the steel bracelet on his wrist. The deputy to whom he was manacled was crawling out. The prison gates beyond were closing and Dean Kent wistfully and forlornly, turned his pale, pathetic face back for one last look, over his shoulder, at the outside world, the world on top of which he had sat.

"Come on. . . . Let's go!" one of the deputies urged.

The other led the way through a door graced with the legend, "John Wallace, Captain of Yard." They entered a small office where a heavy-set, heavy-jowled, heavy-eyebrowed man sat at a table. The first deputy spread a document before him.

"The commitment papers, sir," he said. For a brief instant the small, beady eyes of Captain Wallace searched the drawn face of

the prisoner. Then the gaze shifted to the papers. "Huh! Manslaughter . . . seven years," a deep, hollow voice intoned. This was followed by a rapid fire of questions: "First time in prison?" . . . "Yes." . . . "*Sir, to me!*" . . . "Yes, sir." . . . "How old?" "Twenty-four—sir." . . . "Ever in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps?" . . . "No, sir." . . . "Use tobacco?" . . . "Yes, sir." . . . "Dope?" . . . "No, sir." . . .

His questioner brought the inquisition to an abrupt end with:

"Frisk him!"

The metal bracelet was taken from Kent's wrist, and as he rubbed the red indentation in his flesh the deputies ransacked his pockets, tossing their contents on the table. Captain Wallace listlessly pawed over the miscellaneous collection—a watch and chain, notebook, letters, handkerchief, a West African "lucky" pocket piece—those personal effects which become such an intricate factor in the daily life of every man. He made a heap of everything save a package of cigarettes. This he shoved toward the prisoner.

"You can keep these," he said, magnani-

mously. Kent reached out and then hesitated.

"I'd—I'd like——"

"What?" snapped the Captain.

"That locket," said Kent.

"Oh-ho, I see. Let's look in it."

Kent made as if to restrain him, but the Captain darted an authoritative flash at him. He pried open the locket and a small, oval picture fell out.

"Humph! Not a bad-looking jane," he commented. Then he asked: "Married?" Kent shook his head. The sight of the picture caused his Adam's apple to swell in his throat. He was speechless.

"Oh, take it," said Wallace.

Kent snatched up the picture of Anne Marlowe and ran his finger over the face as though to rub off the contamination of profane hands. Wallace indicated the rest of his effects and and grinned.

"You can have those when you blow here," he said.

Kent winced. Wallace continued ruthlessly: "And with them you can have back your name. From now on you are just a number—er, let me see—number four-four-three-three-three.

Four and three make seven—that's you. Seven years. And a good poker hand to boot." He smiled at his grim joke. Then, with the air of a despot who is bored at jesting, he snapped:

"Breeze him out of here—give him the wórks!"

"The works" consisted of a regulation prison hair cut, in which the clippers played the major rôle, a bath in which there seemed more disinfectant than water, and an exhausting session with the fingerprint and the Bertillon operators. He then was hustled into the clothing room, where a man looked at him just once and tossed him one after the other a pair of coarse trousers, a suit of flannel underwear, a blouse of the same material as the trousers, a pair of hobnailed and clumsy prison brogans and a cap with an extremely long visor.

"Shake it up," urged the deputy. "We've got to mug you yet. Leave that cap off."

He was "mugged" front and side views all in one shot. He faced the camera and his profile was reflected in a mirror. A guard placed his number—*his number!*—on his chest so that everything was taken in that one picture—his face, his identity, his situation, his status, his sorrow, and his shame.



A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. *The Big House.*

FOREGROUND OF PRISON SHOWING INMATES DURING RELAXATION.

Then they jerked him out of the chair and another guard marched him off, down a corridor until they came to a door which bore the inscription: "James Adams, Warden." The guard knocked softly and opened the door almost simultaneously, and peeped in. He drew Kent inside with him. Kent saw here at a glance a modernly equipped office—an office which might have been one of a hundred thousand in the city he had left. But an office with a distinctly original outlook. For through the great, plate-glass window at the other side could be seen the high-walled prison yard, now almost deserted, as it was after lockup time and the purple shadows of twilight played garishly beneath the window. A few trusties moved about below.

As Kent and the guard stood in the doorway the Warden finished his conversation over one of the three telephones on his desk. Kent studied his sternly chiseled, yet not unkindly profile. His eyes were steely gray. His hair was beginning to turn at the temples. A woman, a motherly sort, with her coat and hat on, stood at his elbow.

"I'm sorry, Kate," said the Warden, leaning back and smiling at the woman, "I won't

be able to make it home before eleven. Tell Aunt Emmy to stay all night. Now run along. Good-by, dear."

The Warden arose and kissed his wife and walked with her to the opposite door—the door to the outside! As the woman left and the door closed Kent felt the more keenly his own isolation. The Warden, still not glancing at the guard and the prisoner, took his seat at his desk. The guard advanced and placed a file of papers before his superior.

Warden Adams glanced at them with a practiced eye and then looked up, a wistful smile on his face.

"I hate to see a young fellow like you in here for manslaughter," he began.

"It was an accident, sir," hoarsely answered Kent, slightly raising his bowed head. He burned to explain.

"I remember your case. I read it in the newspapers. You killed two people in an automobile accident——"

"Yes, an accident——"

"My boy, it may be that you have been picked out as an example, but you must take the rap. You must spend seven years of your life here."

"But it was New Year's Eve—I had been drinking," insisted Kent.

"Your sentence can be reduced by good behavior and careful observance of the prison rules," continued the Warden. "You are not, in the common sense of the word, a criminal. They will ride you and call you a 'foreigner.' You will be thrown among criminals, among men with whom you would not ordinarily associate on the outside. I must warn you against the influences you will encounter here." He paused, and then added: "In fact, against the influences you would encounter in any prison."

"Yes, sir. Thanks, sir."

"And also remember this—prisons don't give a fellow a yellow streak. But if he has one—they bring it out. That is all."

The Warden smiled sadly and turned to the guard.

"Have you a cell assignment for this man?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Number 329 in Section B."

The Warden nodded. The guard beckoned Kent to follow him. When the door closed Pop Riker, a trusty, who had been standing in the background, came forward and said to the Warden:

"Do you realize who you are putting that boy with?"

"No. . . . Who?"

"Morgan, the slickest crook we ever played house with here . . . and Machine Gun Butch."

"Yes? Hum——"

The Warden arose and began to pace the floor. Then he wheeled on the trusty and said: "Pop, don't you get chicken-hearted. It can't be helped. At the last Governor's Council I warned them that we had three thousand men here—and had cells for only eighteen hundred. They want to throw every crook into prison in this state, but they don't care what provision is made for him. What can we do? But some day we'll pay for their penny-pinching. Mark my word!"

The Warden walked to the window and he looked out into the prison yard. He was still standing there when Kent, his slight figure bent beneath his bundle of blankets and mattress, crossed the yard followed by the guard. The Warden shook his head and sighed and turned back to his desk. He had a son, in college, just this other boy's age and build.

CHAPTER III

Machine Gun Butch Schmidt, gangster and killer, was holding forth on his favorite topic—murder. His activities in that line were indefinitely curtailed, as he was doing "the book in stir," but he liked to talk about his former exploits. He had plenty to remember. He had killed his share. And for death they had given him life.

"Be happy—that's me motto," Machine Gun Butch was saying, as he sat on the edge of his bunk in Cell No. 329, Section B. "And whenever you go out to clip a guy, always have yer head about you—see? Dey wouldn't a-got me if I hadn't o' took that last swig o' swill dey called gin. Why, I clipped dem three guys from a taxi like nobody could-o' clipped 'em. Eh, Morg?"

He butted his head against the top of his bunk, which was the bottom of Duncan Mor-

gan's. Morgan, who was lying with his face to the wall, merely snorted. He was doing a bit of active thinking, too. Usually he enjoyed Butch's macabre humor. But to-night a queer mood was on him and he was thinking of what his life might have been—with the right woman.

On the subject of women he and Butch could find no common ground. To the killer a broad was a broad—and that was as broad as it was long. He sometimes recalled with a bit of sly sentimentality that "Sadie was a good old blister." And he lamented the fact that he had "croaked her with that ant poison." And he would sigh.

Butch was a giant of a man—his heart harder than his muscles. His sense of humor was usually of such a vicious nature that it easily turned into brutal fury. He was liked and feared by the men. He bullied them and inspired in them a hatred for the prison guards. To those he was sardonically polite. He appeared always smiling, humble and obedient in their presence, but the minute they were out of his sight he called down on them the damnations of the devil. Butch had launched into his slaughter of the Mulligan brothers and

how he had wiped out the De Lacey gang, when the keen ear of Morgan heard the footsteps of several men in the corridor. They grew nearer and paused in front of his prison door.

"Here's your bunk, Kid," said Sandy, the guard, and he opened the cell door. Kent, seeing the size of the cell and the size of Butch, who seemed to completely occupy it, hesitated. The guard pushed him in and shut and snapped the door.

Kent caught the bars of the cell and peered through. He made as if he would cry out in protest.

"Hello, Kid," greeted Butch, grinning. Then he butted the bunk above with his head. "Look down here, Morg; there's company in the parlor."

Kent turned and surveyed the small cell with its three bunks one above the other—its three pegs for the clothes, and its solitary bit of furnishing—a large slop bucket. He looked into the evil eyes of Butch, beneath their shaggy awnings, and then into the steady, sympathetic eyes of Morgan, who had turned over for a peep.

"Make yourself right at home, Kid," said the garrulous Butch, waving his huge paw.

"That's your Pullman up there. Plenty o' fresh air and a good view of the slop jar. Gonna be with us long? What you in for?"

"Manslaughter. It was—" began Kent, tossing his blanket and mattress in the top bunk.

"Oh, not bad—put her there," enthused Butch, offering his hand.

"It was an accident," finished Kent.

"An accident!" and Butch grinned in a knowing way. "Hey, Morg, this guy ain't no pansy, no matter how he looks."

"My car hit another——"

"Oh-h!" and Butch's tone was contemptuous. "So that's how you got the manslaughter rap, eh? Huh, I thought you was a real man; now I see you ain't dry behind the ears. Huh, a foreigner, Morg."

Butch spat disdainfully. Not a muscle in Morgan's face moved as he continued to gaze at the boy. Kent removed his coat and Butch jumped up and took it from him with mock politeness. Morgan smiled. Butch made as if to brush it off, slipped his hand in the pocket and palmed Kent's package of cigarettes. He then hung the coat up. Kent did not see the theft, but Morgan did.

"Don't they have any air in here?" mournfully asked Kent.

"Yes—plenty of air—hot," said Morgan, glancing at Butch, who had deftly extracted a cigarette from the pack and lighted it. Kent reached over to where his coat hung and placed a hand in the pocket. Then he turned and looked at Butch accusingly.

"You got my cigarettes!" he said.

Butch leaped up and towered over the youngster. A wicked grin on his countenance, he deliberately blew the smoke into Kent's face.

"Why you dirty little liar—you know you never had no cigarettes," he said teasingly.

"Yes, I did," insisted Kent. "And you took them when you hung up my coat."

"Me?" shouted Butch, fanning the smoke away with a menacing gesture. "You say I took your cigarettes! I may be a killer but I'm no thief, you dirty little rat."

Kent looked at Morgan for corroboration and seeing only a level, unrevealing gaze, he turned to the cell door and called:

"Guard! Guard!"

Butch grabbed his shoulder with a steel-trap grip. He threatened:

"You think you're in a Y.M.C.A.! Shut up, you little squawker—I'll wrap both o' your legs around your neck an' tie 'em in a butterfly bowknot."

"Give me my cigarettes," weakly protested Kent. The guard's steps were heard approaching. Butch flopped down on his bunk. Kent, rubbing his shoulder, went to the cell door.

"What's wrong in here?" called Sandy.

"He took my cigarettes," whined Kent, pointing to Butch.

"He's all wet," complacently from Butch, who was removing his trousers.

"Did he take them, Morgan?" asked Sandy.

"I don't know—I was asleep, sir," from Morgan, who yawned and turned over.

"Now listen, young fellow," warned the guard, "any more of this racket and you'll spend your first night in the hole."

"But——"

"Pipe down!"

The guard was gone. Kent turned toward Butch, who had arisen, a vicious leer on his face.

"You will yell copper, eh? Well, you're goin' a get your first lesson in stir. Don't ever bleat, see?"

Butch let go a swift left jab which caught Kent on the jaw. The boy crumpled and sank to the floor of the cell.

"I only tapped him," said Butch, half apologetically, as Morgan leaped from his bunk, his lips tightened.

"Put him in his bunk," ordered Morgan.

Butch lifted the boy in his giant arms as though he were a cat, and laid him on the top bunk. Morgan, his eyes narrowed, waited until he had covered him and then caught Butch's shoulder.

"Now put those cigarettes back in his coat," he said in a low, mandatory tone.

"Who? Me? I ain't got that Kid's ciggies. What's eatin' you!"

"Don't try to stall *me*," and Morgan never lifted his voice.

Butch fidgeted, shrugged his shoulders and then grinned sheepishly.

"Well, I ain't no slicker like you, Morg," he said finally. "I did borrow them fags, but I'm goin' to return them, see?"

He took the package from his pocket. "Put them back," ordered Morgan. Butch stuffed the cigarettes in Kent's coat and his investigating fingers found the photograph, which he

promptly took out. He looked at it and whistled.

"Look at the floozy!" he exclaimed.

"Let me see."

Morgan took the picture in his hand. The eyes of Anne Marlowe looked into his with an honest, open gaze.

For the first time Duncan Morgan felt ashamed! Her eyes seemed to rebuke him for the evils of his life and the worthlessness of his existence. It was such a knowing, understanding look. Morgan felt the blood rush up. Here was the thing he had so long been denied, and which he felt he wanted so badly—a lovely, good woman. This, he fancied, was the woman of whom he had dreamed that evening. He would not part with this picture now for anything, and he would learn her name. She was too good for that whining weakling who had been thrown into this threesome where he played the baby act and couldn't protect or avenge himself.

Butch had fallen into his bunk and had drawn the dirty blanket over his head. Morgan placed the picture in his blouse pocket. He crawled into his own bunk and stared straight above. The eerie, forlorn notes of

taps trembled in the air. The guards began to call, one after the other, their "Nine o'clock and O.K.!" their voices trailing off into moribund cadences. The lights went out.

In the bunk above, the boy began to groan. Butch was already snoring loudly. Morgan, whose tortured thoughts gripped him, turned suddenly on his stomach and buried his face in his rule pillow and wept.

CHAPTER IV

THREE thousand men who had failed to "beat the rap"—killers, con men, gunmen, sluggers, absconders, embezzlers, dope fiends, burglars —that sinister other limb of society, were herded in the Big House. They were jammed into cells, crammed into workshops, crowded into mess halls. They were fed on tainted meat, beans, and prison slum. Their surliness was met with curses, their grumblings with blows, and their aggressiveness with solitary confinement in the cooler.

Tower guards nervously paced the prison parapets, always on hair trigger to release their hellish machine gun bullets, and guards who were not allowed to carry firearms used their bludgeons at the flimsiest provocation. The warden was openly anxious. Sometimes the general sentiment of the prisoners, who were caged like menagerie animals, manifested itself

in a pandemonium of mass yelling, which the guards could not quiet. Here in the Big House the prison code was peremptory and omnipotent. It was more zealously observed among the prisoners than was the law by which so-called decent people live. It was the code of mutual protection. Don't squeal! Don't stool!

It was the code of the underworld where the double-cross inspired a swift and violent death. In prison it was the prisoner against the world. And in prison, as in every other walk of life, there were traitors. Kent, who had had his first lesson the night he entered prison and who still felt the dull throb in his jaw where Butch's fist had landed, quickly learned the creed in a hundred little ways. He had learned, too, that there was an undercurrent of unrest which preshadowed violence. The prisoners were becoming more bold and brazen every day.

Morgan, who singled Kent out always when they were in the narrow recreation yard, sought by careful questioning to draw from him the name of the girl in the picture. He had never returned the photograph to Kent, but always had kept it close to his heart. Kent had be-

come angered when he found the picture gone the morning after Butch had silenced him, but he dared say nothing. And Morgan admired him the less for it—a man who would wrangle and turn fink over the theft of his cigarettes, but who choked down when the picture of his girl was stolen!

Morgan surmised that she must be his girl. She did not look like his sister. He had said he was not married. But try as he could, Morgan could learn nothing about the girl. He looked often at the little picture as he held it half concealed in the palm of his hand, and he felt an impulse to demand of Kent that girl's name and address. He began to grow jealous over her and to secretly hate Kent. A week after the boy had entered the prison, Morgan walked over to him in the recreation yard.

"Don't take it so hard, Kid—" he began.

Kent flared up.

"Don't take it so hard! Hell! This sort of thing might be all right for—er, Butch or men like him. But for me it's different. I never was meant for such treatment and such atmosphere."

"Oh, Butch and the rest aren't so bad. It never meant anything for Butch to knock off a

human life. But he's a good guy—most killers are regular guys. Nothing pussyfoot or underhand about them."

"You can't sell me on Butch or—well, he's not my kind. Anyway he bullies me from morning until night."

"I guess if you was walking along with your gal on the outside, you wouldn't give me and Butch a knockdown, eh?"

"Say, damn you, don't bring Anne's name in this!" shouted Kent.

"Anne—who's Anne?" Morgan was hopeful.

"Anne Marlowe—my finacée—and don't talk about her—I tell you, don't talk about her in a place like this. I won't have it——"

Kent was excited. Tears welled in his eyes. His body shook with emotion. Morgan was sympathetic:

"There, there, Kid, I guess I know how you feel. You're right—Anne Marlowe shouldn't be brought into any discussion here. Not Anne Marlowe."

He pronounced the name with lingering deliciousness. Kent glanced at him suspiciously. But Morgan was looking away, his lips moving. Anne Marlowe! So that was her name. Anne Marlowe! How simple and beautiful. Just

like her picture. Morgan walked away, groggy, paying no further attention to Kent. Morgan passed through the crowd of prisoners, seeing nothing. He strode by without heeding a Mexican who was intoning a paternoster in Spanish; two fine-looking men who might have been bankers in the other world; a young boy, thin, tubercular, coughing; two grizzled old-timers cursing amiably between themselves; two Chinese jabbering in their monosyllabic jargon. He walked on until he ran into Butch, who was standing in the midst of his usual group of admirers—Olsen, the Swede; Joe Lajensky, one-time gunman and now a trusty and tender of the prison garden; Dopey, who still got his heroin somehow and sent the drug scorching into veins through a scratch made with a rusty safety pin, and Putman, who had killed a man because he wore spats.

"Some day I'll carve the heart out of that skunk Wallace, and send it in a tin can to the Governor," Butch was saying. He saw Morgan: "Say, Morg, we're getting everything in fine shape for the big blow-off. . . ."

Morgan nodded, but said nothing. Butch slapped him on the back.

"Say, what's getting into you! You act like

you was takin' hop. Come on, snap out of it."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah—we've got the works fixed."

Butch and the rest got their heads together and began to whisper. Meantime, Kent, who was leaning against the wall, watched them from a distance.

Frank Oliver, an obsequious, shoe-licking trusty who was serving a ten spot for larceny, stopped in front of Kent.

"Hello, punk. What's the slap? You pack a blue grouch. Butch again?"

Kent looked up listlessly.

"He'll kill me some day. He bullies me all the time. In line he steps on my heels, shoves me from behind, kicks me, and when I look around he grins or makes a funny, disgraceful noise with his mouth. He carries a knife and he'll stab me. He gets mad at nothing."

"Oh, he carries a knife, does he?" and Oliver whistled.

"Sure—sharp as a razor."

"Where'd he get it?"

"Oh, I don't know—it's been passed along from one to the other for months now. The original owner is in the cooler, I think."

"Well, why don't you get even with Butch—put the squawk on him."

"My God, no!"

"Get wise—learn the racket. It means time off for you. Look at me. I've knocked off six years of my bit by slippin' little things to the screws now and then. And in this case it'll make it safer for you, anyway."

"But he'll murder me," Kent shook his head.

"Well, you ain't gonna publish this in the *Journal*—he'll never get hep. And you'll be gettin' hunk with him, see?"

Oliver shuffled away, after nudging Kent in the ribs and winking. Kent followed him with his gaze and saw him turn a bit off his route to pass close to Wallace, the captain of the yard. He was sure Oliver spoke to Wallace, but he did not stop and the guard never turned his head. Soon Wallace walked over toward Kent, and as he passed him he looked at him searchingly. Kent dropped his eyes.

Then Wallace strolled by the group where Butch was standing and Kent experienced a spasm of terror. He was sure that Oliver had told Wallace what he had said about Butch's

knife—but Wallace did nothing and kept on his way, and Kent breathed easier. But Oliver's words had sunk deep into his mind: "I've knocked off six years by slippin' little things to the screws——"

CHAPTER V

"Beans again!"

Butch looked his disgust. He picked up the plate, smelled, and then flipped it down, spinning it away from him.

"Burned, too—and sour!"

"Twenty-one times a week—beans—hash-beans," sniffed Joe Lajensky.

Above the clatter of the dishes and clumping of the hobnailed shoes of the waiters were growls of protest on every side. The large, ominous sign, "*Silence!*" which hung in a conspicuous place in the mess hall might have been an oriflamme. Wallace, universally disliked, and Oliver, his shadow, walked about here and there, calling for silence. But the sound swelled in magnitude and rose, like the hum of disturbed bees in a hive, to a low monotonous drone. Wallace stepped quickly behind Butch, who had closed up like a clam at his approach.

"You're gabbing!"

"No, sir, it's them beans——"

"What!"

"I said, 'No sir, I ain't been'——"

"See that you don't—and that goes for you, Joe, and you Morgan and you—you dopey nut —see that sign?"

He walked away. Butch looked straight ahead, but poison hung to his words as they dropped from the side of his mouth:

"God, how I hate that skunk! If I was a ventrilioquizt I'd say things in that guy's ears that would make his hair frizzle."

"He's on the hunt," warned Morgan. "Pass the word along for the boys to stop beefing. He means business."

Wallace, in fact, had paused at the end of the table, where he stood with his arms akimbo, a leer on his face, his sharp eyes watching every move. The bean course having been served, the waiters now came in with buckets full of codfish, which they began to slop out on the plates. The low rumble of a growl in the throats of the prisoners now arose as a sinister obligato to a muttered word of loathing here and there.

"Codfish—phew!"

Butch held his nose. Joe Lajensky seconded his leader:

"It smells bad enough when you get it fresh in Boston on Sunday mornin's—but Monday in stir—fooey!"

"You cons better be still; Wallace is piping you off," from Morgan, who was bending low over his plate.

"Let him come; I'll shove it down his pipes."

Butch was working himself into a nasty humor. Others, who had been watching him, became emboldened at his words and started to grumble aloud. On all sides could be heard: "Bum slum . . . rotten chow . . . stinkin' codfish . . . make the screws eat it . . ."

Butch suddenly grabbed up his plate and threw it against the wall of the mess hall, at the "Silence" sign, shrilling:

"Swill—come and get it, you hogs."

Wallace, hearing the plate strike the wall and Butch's shout of defiance, ran forward.

"Who did that?" he demanded.

"I did!" and Butch arose menacingly. "Whatcha think of that! Whatcha goin' do about it, you flat-footed roundhead?"

The whole room was in an uproar. The men began to protest aloud. The guards on the

balcony, which ran around the walls of the room, unslung their rifles and waited for a signal from Wallace, as he started toward Butch. Morgan tried to jerk Butch into his seat, but the berserk killer's self-control was gone, and as he saw Wallace coming toward him, he snatched up the plate from in front of Morgan and hurled it at the captain of the yard. As it caught him in the pit of the stomach, a great shout went up from the convicts. The guards above ran to the balcony rails and leveled their rifles. Trusties and other guards on the floor concentrated near Wallace, whose clothes were covered with the mess of codfish and beans. Butch, his countenance dark and foreboding, stood up in majestic defiance. The prisoners began to pound the tables with their tin cups, knives and forks. Others flung their plates on the floor and the voices grew louder and more challenging—"Slumgullion . . . rotten . . . slops . . . slum . . ."

A fever of furious protest had swept the mess hall. Wallace was shouting for quiet. But his commands were drowned. Plates with food were pitched to the floor or at the guards. The musketeers on the balcony were now sighting their guns at the ringleaders. Many of the

men were on their feet. Suddenly the command "*Fire!*" was heard from Wallace. There was a deafening roar as the guards obeyed. Fearful screams reverberated. The prisoners—all but Butch—dropped in their seats—or to the floor.

"Shoot your heads off!" cried Butch, with a foul-mouthed oath, pounding the table with his sledge-hammer fist. "Guns don't stop Butch! You know me—Machine Gun Butch! To hell with you! . . . Come on, you white-livered, yaller-bellied heels, get on your feet. What y'afraid of? What've *youse* got to lose?"

"Sit down, damn you, sit down!" shouted Wallace. "That volley went against the walls. Next time it'll go into you! Sit down, Butch!"

"Pansies—cowards—gutless sons o'——"

"Sit down, Butch—last chance for you!"

Butch, sweeping the room with a disdainful glance and finding himself alone in the fight, shrugged his shoulders and slumped into his seat. At that instant the door at the end of the mess hall was flung open and the Warden, fearless, dynamic, came in. He leaped upon the nearest table and called:

"Listen! I had to give you men codfish for

three straight days because the beef was condemned. I don't blame you for complaining. But you can't get by with this rough stuff. You can't destroy property and endanger your own lives and ours! Now get this! I'm boss here! I didn't invite you men to come here! But while you're here, you're going to do as I say! Remember that!"

He paused to see the effects of his words. The mess hall was quiet.

"Who started all this?" he asked.

"Butch!" shouted Wallace.

"All right, Butch—in the hole for you!"

The Warden jumped down lightly from the table and walked out. Wallace, with several guards at his side, started toward Butch. Morgan whispered:

"Butch—ditch that knife!"

Butch suddenly leaned forward, his breast against the table. He deftly extricated the knife from his blouse and pressed it into the waiting hands of his pal. Then he stood up, waiting for Wallace. Morgan quickly passed the knife to Joe Lajensky, who sat at his right. Beneath the table Joe passed it on to Dopey. Dopey to Putnam; Putnam to a Mexican at his right; the Mex quickly to Kent, who sat

at the end of the table, near the wall. Kent, when he felt the cold steel in his hands, turned pale. He tried to refuse it, but the spig sat stoically at his side, his hands between his knees. Kent hurriedly placed it in his blouse, chill sweat breaking out on his brow.

Meantime they had surrounded Butch.

"Frisk him!" ordered Wallace.

Butch grinned.

"I ain't got nothin' on me."

"Huh—you had a knife, didn't you?"

"Me? A knife?" Butch was offended. "I ain't seen a knife since I ripped the gizzards out o' that wop on Mulberry Street——"

"Well, come on, you'll have plenty of time to think of that in the cooler—and it'll teach you some table manners, too."

"Why, I ain't done a thing," insisted Butch, as they led him away to solitary confinement. "I was jus' gaggin' for the boys. Can't we have some comedy in this joint? See? I'm laughin', myself. Ha—ha—ha—it's funny an' goin' to get funnier."

CHAPTER VI

Morgan was working assiduously over his task in the jute mill, wondering how his friend Butch was taking it down in the hellish dungeon, and wondering if his attorney had gotten the letter he had written him, when a guard fingered him on the shoulder. He jumped as though he had been surprised in some forbidden act.

"Your mouthpiece to see you, Morgan."

Morgan raised his eyes heavenward in relief and followed. They entered a small room divided in the middle by a three-foot wall. One side was for the prisoners, the other for the visitors. Running up from the wall to the ceiling was a fine-meshed steel-wire netting, and on a raised platform sat two guards who could see every move of the prisoners and their callers. Beyond the metal net, Morgan saw his attorney, Michael Moran Dunn, a ruddy-

faced fellow who wore a continual smile and appeared always in the airiest of spirits.

"I've got some great news for you, Morgan," began Dunn.

"You got my letter?" asked Morgan, anxiously.

"Yes, yes, man—but this is important——"

"Important—what do you mean!"

"Now don't get angry, but listen to me—you're to be paroled—I've sprung you!"

"In time for Christmas dinner?" sarcastically.

"Now don't bite at me—you're out to-morrow."

"To-morrow! You mean—you mean——"

"To-morrow—the day after to-day——"

"If you're kiddin' me I'll break you in half when I get out."

"I'm not kidding you. It's all in the bag. I just came from the Warden's office."

"But how did you juggle it?"

"Oh, I got some heavy wires—some big shots outside. It sets me back plenty. Ten grand. But you can make it back on the first trick you turn——"

"Sure. I'll——"

Morgan hesitated and the look on his face

caused Dunn to turn and observe a young woman who had come up beside him. Morgan turned white—then red—then he trembled.

"My God, it's her!" Morgan whispered hoarsely.

"You mean—you mean that frail you wrote me about——"

"Yes—yes—" Morgan was too agitated to talk. He stared with bulging eyeballs at the girl. She was peering anxiously at the door where the prisoners entered. She did not notice Morgan's rude glances. She did not know he was alive.

"Come on," urged Morgan, "let's get down toward the wall. I don't want her to see me. That's her, all right. I'd know the face on that picture anywhere. She lives up to it and way past it. The rest o' her——"

"Say I tried to pick up that broad on the train coming down—she's cold as a loan shark's heart."

Morgan's tone became bitter, threatening.

"Listen, lay off her. Can't you see she's on the up-an'-up? Don't try no swift line with her or——"

"Oke, Morg. Who the hell wants her? I throw a million like her over my shoulder."

"Now here's what you're goin' to do. I'm out to-morrow, you say. Well, you tail that girl when she leaves the train and find out where she kips. Or talk to her on the way back—tell her you know how you can spring her boy friend—a lollypop named Kent. Pull anything to find out about her. But take this along; no rough stuff. You're my lawyer, not my understudy. If I can't meet her, say, it's got so I don't give a damn if I'm out or not."

"I got you. For her you'd shoot straight, change your monicker, blow the racket——"

A far-away look came into Morgan's eyes.

"It's been done," he sighed.

"Oh, yeh? And what about my ten grand for breezing you out?" The lawyer was all business.

"Don't be like that, Mike—I'll cop that first. Don't worry."

"Okay, sucker. I'll see you in my office to-morrow. So long. And without me it would've been longer."

"Long enough. So long."

Morgan turned and the guard, waiting for him, wigwagged and followed him out. He did not dare look back toward Anne Marlowe. His



A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture *The Big House.*

THANKSGIVING WORSHIP IN THE PRISON CHAPEL.

great fear was that she would notice him. He did not want her to see his face. She must never know he had been a jailbird, a gun.

As he passed the threshold, he met Kent.

"Hello," he greeted. "Someone to see you, too, Kid?"

Kent absently looked at him and nodded. Morgan went back to his job in the jute mill. To the rhythmic spin of the big machine belt his heart sang a song.

"My old ma would be proud if she knew what her bad baby was thinkin'," he muttered through a smile.

Meantime, Kent was talking through the screen to Anne.

"Dean, you look so pale and unhappy—are you sick?" Anne asked solicitously.

"Yes," growled Kent bitterly, "I'm sick—sick of it all. Sick of the food, of associating with beasts, of sleeping with vermin, of everything. Oh, Anne, I can't stand it! I'll go mad here. And you say the Governor can't do anything?"

"No, I saw him myself—yesterday. He was nice and polite and he said he was truly sorry for you, but that the law would have to take

its course. There has been so much reckless and drunken driving——"

"I've heard all that claptrap before. He's a hell of a Governor!" snapped Kent.

"Don't talk like that, Kent," begged Anne. "I want to do everything I can for you. All your friends are helping. I didn't want to build up illusions. It will be easier for you to bear your misery if you reconcile yourself to it. Anyway, other men have lived through just what you are experiencing and they have come out to find happiness—and honor—and success——"

"Aw—you've been reading a lot of balderdash and bromides," moaned Kent. "Be practical. Do something!"

"Don't scold me, Kent. I've attempted everything I could for you. I'm not giving up hope. I'm still trying——"

"There should be some way. I hear these crooks in here telling how they beat the rap even after they were in stir——"

"Beat the rap—stir—what's that?"

"Oh, I'm beginning to talk like the rest of these morons. I mean, they managed to find some legal loophole by which to get out of prison—to cut down their sentences."

"But isn't there something you can do here —something in the way of good behavior—to cut down your own term?"

Kent was silent a moment.

"Yes," he began slowly, as though thinking out carefully just what he was saying. "There is a way here. There's a way to cut down the number of years. They say it's a wise way. I didn't want to try it—but I will!"

"I'm so glad!" enthused Anne, pressing her face against the screen.

"Yes, there's one way," Kent's whisper took on a more excited pitch. "And I'll do it. I'll show these cattle! Why should I spare them! You don't know what it's like here—day after day, hour after hour, minute after minute. Torture! To feel that you are confined here and can't get away—it's maddening. I can't stand it. I'll go crazy. Crazy, I tell you! No sensitive nature can endure it!"

The look in his eyes frightened Anne. She tried to console him.

"You poor boy—I'm sorry for you! I'm fond of you. I'm waiting for you. Serve your time and come out to be an honorable man. You can live through it; you can live it down——"

A guard approached.

"Time's up." He turned to Anne. "I'm sorry, Miss. Visitors can't stay long to-day. Get goin', Kid."

"Good-by, Dean!"

"Good-by, Anne!"

Anne watched him vanish. Then she sighed.

"I *am* sorry for him," she mused. "And I *am* fond of him, and I *am* waiting for him . . . but I couldn't—I just couldn't say 'I love you, Dean.'"

CHAPTER VII

KENT went back to the jute mill with a new resolution in his heart. An acid resolution. He would spare no one. He would think only of himself. These men were not his kind. What if he did double-cross them! They were not of his world. Once out of prison he would never see the likes of them again. It was no situation for ethics and intangible split-hair honor. The law of the lawless!

He would insinuate himself into their confidence, sit in council with them, learn of their plans as one of them, and then inform on them. Stool pigeon! Fink! What difference! If they were his own kind he might hesitate. But with men like them—bah! The code! The code—handed down through generations of wolves!

"Kid, I'm leaving you to-morrow." It was Morgan's low, full voice. He stood beside Kent in the jute mill.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I got my rain check. I'm going out to-morrow—out into God's world—out to —to—past that gate."

"You are going out? Why, I thought you had a long bit ahead of you yet?"

Kent was dazed.

"Oh, that was a pushover—my legaler is clever."

"You're going to leave prison?" Kent could hardly realize the significance of the words.

"Far, far behind—in the big choochoo—out there."

"I can't understand how you beat the barrier and——"

His tone was wormwood. He was griped with a terrible hatred—a hot hatred for the laws of man, a cold hatred for the wiles of man —a hatred for injustice of man, a hatred for Morgan—a hatred for all mankind.

"Cheer up, Kid—maybe I can plug for you—a guy is all diff'rent on the outside lookin' in than on the inside lookin' out. Maybe there's someone I can see for you—your sweetheart——"

"You lowlife—don't mention her. No, you can't do a thing for me!"

Kent's tone was a sneer. But Morgan was in jubilant spirits. He could not be offended now. He began to whistle softly.

"I won't sock you on the kisser, Kid. I feel too great. Pull yourself together an'—pray."

"That's easy enough for you to say," Kent's voice had changed. He began to blubber now. "You are going out! You can talk like that. You are not just a crook—you're a Babbitt—to talk like that. Pull myself together and—pray!"

The whistle blew for the recreation period. The prisoners stood back from their work and formed into line to lockstep out for a few minutes' breath of fresh air. Kent, who fell in behind Morgan, clutched at the knife he had in his blouse, the knife he had taken earlier in the day from the scurvy Mex after Butch had "ditched" it. Kent had found no time yet to dispose of the knife, and right now he touched it lovingly, caressingly, as his sodden, sullen gaze rested on the nape of Morgan's neck. But Kent was no killer.

In the recreation yard he isolated himself. Morgan was gleefully telling the others of his good fortune. Kent visited maledictions on

him beneath his breath. An unearthly bitterness against the man—this man who was going free—seared his soul. Why should he, a crook, be allowed to go forth to rob and murder? It was foul, fiendish injustice.

While Kent was in this mood, Oliver, his furtive little mouse's eyes bristling, toddled up. He saw at once that Kent was in low spirits.

"Bad news, Kid?" he asked.

"Nothing very pleasant—I just learned that I'll have to do my full time."

"What did I tell you?—get the low-down on someone. Tell Wallace. He's for you already."

"Would that actually help me?" Kent was doubtful of everything. "Get me time off?"

"Sure, plenty of time—and if you crab a big breeze, it may kick the gates for you. An' let me in—that'll let us both out. See?"

Kent's mind was whizzing. Kick the gates for him! And he knew there was a "big breeze" in the air. Maybe with Morgan out it would never materialize. Morgan would be better off here . . . kick the gates . . . liberty . . .

"I see," he gasped, "get the goods on someone. H'm . . ."

Kent stumbled away. He saw Wallace standing alone a short distance off. As Oliver watched him shrewdly, he scraped toward Wallace and as Kent came abreast of him, without turning his head, he slipped from the corner of his bloodless mouth:

"I think, sir, Morgan's got a knife on him."

He entered the cell house. Wallace looked after him a bit puzzled, a bit skeptical, a bit suspicious. But Oliver, a sardonic grin on his mug, a leer of triumph, came along just then, and the two men exchanged a glance of profound understanding. Wallace gave an almost perceptible nod of his head.

Kent steered directly for his cell. There he saw Morgan and another man inside. For a moment he was startled.

"Who's that?" he asked Morgan, indicating the third man, who was in a bunk.

"That's the spig who's takin' Butch's place —he's all right. No speak English."

Kent recognized the man who had passed him the knife at the mess hall table. He trembled. The Mexican turned his head and looked first at Kent, then at Morgan, when he heard their voices. Then he sighed and pil-

lowed his head in his arms. Morgan, humming all the while, began to rummage in his bunk for his tobacco cache.

"Gee, I'd love to meet that old gang o' mine," he sang, ruthlessly.

Kent leaned against the edge of the bunk, looking out the cell door. Directly behind him was Morgan's blouse. Kent watched his opportunity out of the corner of his eye and when Morgan's giggling back was turned, he sneaked out the knife and slipped it into the inner pocket of his bunkie's coat. At that instant Morgan wheeled and Kent nearly collapsed from fright. But without noticing him, Morgan went to the door of the cell and called to Sandy, the guard.

"Do me a favor, Sandy," he urged. "They won't let me tell my pal, Butch, good-by. Here's a bunch of smokes. Hold them for him, will you?"

"Sure," agreed Sandy, taking the tobacco.

Morgan turned a boyishly ecstatic look on Kent.

"Think of it, Kid," he cried. "Kippin' on a mattress . . . white men's food . . . sunlight . . . dancing . . . shows . . . women . . . anyway, a woman!"

Kent wheeled and crawled into his bunk.

Just then they heard Sandy's voice without:

"Out of your cells—everybody!"

"Gee, they're goin' to frisk the cells—lucky Butch ain't here with that chive——"

"Come on—out!"

Kent rolled from his bunk. Morgan nudged the Mexican and the three went outside. Wallace and two guards came up. Wallace ordered:

"Go through Morgan, Sandy."

"Nothin' on me, Captain," smiled Morgan.

Wallace merely grunted. Sandy ran experienced hands over Morgan's clothing, while Wallace entered in the cell.

"Nothing, sir," said Sandy, in a relieved tone. He liked Morgan.

Wallace came out with Morgan's coat.

"This yours?" he asked.

"Yes—but I'm givin' it back to the state," Morgan chuckled. Wallace stuck his hand into the inner pocket and withdrew the knife. Morgan looked at it in an uncomprehending way. Kent turned his head. The Mexican's eyes stood out like eggs. Morgan looked at Wallace, then at Sandy—and then toward Kent.

"You dirty, yellow little louse!" he cried,

making a lunge at Kent. He dug his thumb ends deep into the boy's neck.

"Help! He's killing me!" Kent choked and fought to release the other's hand.

"I'll croak you, you fink!"

Wallace and the two guards tore Morgan off. They pinioned him against the cell door.

"You're a bright crook," snarled Wallace. "You've lost your parole now—think that over down in the cooler. Come on!"

"I'll get you, you skunk, if it's the last act o' my life!" rasped Morgan, as they dragged him away. Kent, rubbing his bleeding, bluing throat, cowered against the wall. He had led his ace.

CHAPTER VIII

Duncan Morgan, who had taken his post-graduate education in stir, had learned to take "the breaks" with a philosophical shrug. He was prepared always for the worst, so that when he found himself plunged into some calamitous misfortune his mind already was made up that his troubles were transitory—and he calmly faced them. All that wasn't misfortune was "velvet."

But this time luck had caught him unprepared. Fate had smacked him squarely between the eyes—from behind. And he was groggy from the foul clout. For, deep down in his bosom already had begun to reawaken that throb of virtue which psychiatrists describe as the instinctive desire of man to live honorably, or maybe the unnatural craving not to live dishonestly.

Something in the eyes of Anne Marlowe—

that straightforward, clean gaze of hers—had started this metamorphosis of his soul. Never before had a woman appeared to him as a spiritual necessity. He had regarded them impersonally from the corporeal sense—and had clung to that danger-signal platitude of his ilk —love 'em where you find 'em an' leave 'em where you love 'em.

Yes—he had plenty of time to reason things out and cool off in the cooler. The dungeon precluded everything but mental activity. In the black blankness of his solitary cell, where he could not see, where he could hear only the faint groans and hysterical protests of other damned, where he could hardly move, Duncan Morgan lay and thought.

Bitterness burned deep within the man. He had just crept up to the lip of the chasm when he was shoved back to the depths. He had preserved a good record this stretch. He had been on the eve of hope and happiness when Kent had crossed him. That he had planned to take Kent's girl did not occur to him. Morgan did not think of it in that light. He had never considered Kent's equity in the girl of the picture. Morgan had long thought of her

as his own. His business was taking what he wanted, no matter whose.

His crowning urge now was revenge. He could never expect to obtain his freedom on parole. During his term in prison he had entered half-heartedly into the schemes of Butch and his gang for a break, but he had never intended to carry out his end. All the time he knew that outside drag was pulling for his release, and he believed the efforts of his attorney would have materialized before any schemes of Butch and his associates could come to a head.

Penologists and those interested in the science that treats of the punishment and prevention of crime and the management of prisons and reformatories, frequently confronted with the question of whether a prison is not the breeding place for lawlessness, might go a step further and investigate the mental reaction to solitary confinement by hardened criminals.

Here, for instance, was a man who had resolved, through the mere contributing influence of an unknown woman, to test the paths of righteousness; who partially, it is true, by good

behavior, had made himself eligible to parole —snatched from his cell without a hearing of any sort and thrown into a lightless, perpendicular coffin to exist for thirty days on stale bread and water.

Duncan Morgan was to emerge from this a better man, knowing all the time that his past conduct would forever convict him when the slightest suspicion rested upon him—convict him without an even chance to prove his innocence. Nothing in all the world so disheartens a man as to find he cannot be let alone to go straight when in his own heart and soul he wants to; when all circumstances around him combat any move for respectability and decency.

Morgan was now set on one thing. He would leave this prison at any cost. He would leave it for the sole purpose of revenge on all men and upon Dean Kent in particular. He would strike at Kent in the most vulnerable spot—he would swipe from him, or at least turn against him, the woman Kent loved and who, for all Morgan knew, loved him. Why should he try to go on the level? Try to live an honorable, upright life, for what? For a woman? He

would never hope, with the stigma of his past, clinging to him like fuliginous aura, to make a woman love him as a good citizen. Anyway, as he had found, they fell more eagerly and easily for the charm of the crook . . . but revenge! Ah! Ah!

The outer door of the dungeon had hardly closed behind the guards before he heard the faint, inquisitive voice of Butch, the recalcitrant killer.

"Hello!"

The melancholy greeting was passed along from cell to cell. Now from a negro whose voice trailed off into a lamenting spiritual; now from a weakened boy, who began to cry; now from an old man, who uttered it with a sigh of hard-boiled hopelessness.

But the voice of Butch was louder, and cheerful. Good old Butch! He'd understand, all right. He would.

"Hello, Butch!" Morgan called back.

"S-a-y! Is that you, Morgie?"

"It ain't my uncle, Butch."

"What happened, Morg?"

"Your knife——"

"My knife!"

"They planted it on me, Butch. I was breezin' it out on parole to-morrow. Hot break, eh?"

"Planted, Morg?"

"Yep."

"Who done it?. . . Who?"

"Oh, what's the diff—I'll take care of the heel in my own way. How is it down here—you know this is my first trip."

"Can't kick, Morg. Make the best of it, Kid. Be happy! They can't break Old Butch's spirit. I say—be happy, boy! Don't let 'em worry you. Nothin' to worry about."

Butch's little speech was met with a series of groans from the others. Morgan laughed.

"And you can't kick on the angel cake they give you here, Kid. Why, they make stale bread taste so good. Figger how much better off we are than them poor devils on the Bowery what can't even get that?"

"Yes, there's one thing in our favor, Butch," called back Morgan, sadly, "things can't go much worse. It's one-way traffic."

How does a man "doing a solitary" spend his time? He can't see. He lives in a little, damp space gutted from the solid stone. He

is conscious of his imprisonment every second. Now he touches the unyielding rock on one side, now the heavy, steel-meshed door. The silence booms in his ears. His own voice makes him leap. His own flesh crawls when he touches it.

What a ghastly instrument of torture his own mind becomes in such existence! He knows neither night nor day. The swinish routine of prison life, even, is denied him. He is conscious of the loss of that which man has sought to build up for ages—system. Unseen vermin crawl within his clothes. Uncontrollable vermin crawl within his brain. His mind never ceases to race, yet it has nothing tangible to run upon. It is fed by fantastic, maddening sensation of the conscious and subconscious.

Conversation is almost impossible, as it has to be carried on in shouts. It is sapping, and in the last days or nights or whatever they might be called in a dungeon, Morgan was too far gone to talk much—or care much. The guards came once every twenty-four hours and threw in a piece of tough, sour, moldy bread, and kicked in a pail of water. And then one day they opened his cell and he heard the gruff command:

"Come out!"

But he was lying on the hard stone, apparently too weak to move. His beard was long. His body was numb. He was almost pulseless. He knew nothing, felt .nothing, saw nothing, cared nothing—this strong man of powerful physique and steel-trap mentality. He had done his trip.

CHAPTER IX

So THE grumbling guards carried Duncan Morgan from his cell in the dungeon where he had spent thirty days and thirty nights. His face was green, his four weeks' growth of beard had become matted with dirt. His eyes were closed and there seemed to be little life left in his emaciated body.

They took him to the prison hospital and the doctor and a convict interne went over him. The interne, who had been a practitioner outside the prison, stood dreamily by, thinking of the day when he would again be free, and the doctor listlessly thrust a thermometer between Morgan's half-closed salmon-colored lips.

"Temperature below normal," he drawled. The interne scratched something on a pad.

"Pulse sixty," continued the doctor in the same disinterested way.

"Respiration twenty-eight."

"Yes, sir."

The doctor shook his thermometer violently and then thrust it into its case. He was about to leave the room when he glanced at a screen which had been placed before a bed. He hesitated. The interne touched him on the arm.

"Pardon, sir," he said, "I forgot to tell you that Carter died this afternoon."

"Oh, all right—I didn't think he'd live. Have the body shifted to the morgue pronto and buried to-night."

He left the room. The interne walked over to the screen and peered behind it as though to reassure himself, and then left also. Morgan opened his eyes slightly, and without moving his head looked up at the ceiling for a while. Then he began to survey the little room, in which the shadows of twilight already had begun to play.

In a few minutes two men came in and, without glancing at Morgan, walked over to the bed behind the screen. They pushed the screen aside and, with one at the head and another at the feet, they carried out what was left of the convict Carter, bed sheets and all.

Morgan smiled grimly. For a time he lay

very quiet on the bed, listening intently. Then he reopened his eyes. He was familiar with the room. He had been detailed there one month to keep it clean. He also knew that the morgue was just through the door to the left in the corridor. And next to that was the death chair—the "hot squat," the state's final courtesy to its worst lawbreakers.

The morgue had another door, too, and this Morgan knew. This door led into a courtyard and after an execution or after a patient had died in the hospital, the black, funereal wagon of the prison backed up to the door and the shrouded body was dumped into it to be taken to the prison cemetery, off over the hills, or to the depot, to be shipped to relatives.

Morgan knew, too, that this wagon generally drew up just after taps, when the body was to be taken to the cemetery. Already a yawning grave would be waiting for the body, and an hour or so later the prison "dead bus" would rumble back through the gates.

Morgan worked over in his mind a desperate scheme. He wondered if he were too weak to attempt it, but the thought of freedom sent new life blazing through his racked body. He felt

better, too, when they brought him some clear, hot broth and poured several spoonfuls down his parched throat.

The doctor made his final visit, felt Morgan's pulse and muttered:

"He'll be all right to-morrow. May as well let the poor devil stay here to-night—after what he's been through. He will probably get a good sleep."

Morgan was soon left alone in the room, which contained but one other bed—the one lately occupied by the unfortunate—or fortunate—Carter. His clothes they had taken away and he had on but a sack-like gown of a heavy white material.

Only the small night light at the entrance to the room was left burning. Morgan knew that in a short time taps would blow. He began a tentative stretching of his muscles to test his condition. He was weak, but his resolution and constitution gave him strength. He slipped from the bed and his bare feet were on the floor. Just to sit up caused him painful effort, and he began to breathe hard. The room jazzed about him.

He sat for a time on the edge of the bed and

then got on his feet again. He reeled, and before he knew it he was sprawled on the bed again. He remained there for a short time and tried again. This attempt took him to the door. He leaned against the wall for a few minutes and laboriously made his way down the corridor to the morgue door. His knees wobbled, but he gritted his teeth. He must carry through. He groped for the handle to the door, and it yielded to his efforts. He went into the room and softly closed the door behind him. It was so dark that for a moment he could see nothing. Then, gradually he began to distinguish objects. Through the narrow, barred window came the faint glow of the moonlight from without. In one corner, near the outer door, he saw a covered figure on the mortuary slab.

Morgan hesitated. If he failed in this attempt he would be thrown again into the dungeon, and this time, he felt, he would never emerge alive. But the spur of vengeance goaded him. He must leave the prison!

He walked unsteadily toward the slab. He removed the dirty old blanket from the corpse. The remains of Carter had been sewed up in a

coarse sack. With trembling fingers Morgan managed to undo the string which bound the sack together at the head.

While he worked feverishly he stopped now and then, almost too weak to continue. His breath came in short, quick gasps. Finally, somehow, he got the stiff, cold clay out of its shroud, and with all the strength he could summon he dragged it into a corner, where he concealed it under several other old blankets which he found there.

Then he crawled upon the slab and wriggled into the shroud. He drew the blanket over him. Before he pulled it completely over his head he took one last look at the beam of moonlight that struggled through the bars of the little window. Then he lay down and with his arms and head still out he pulled the blanket over him.

With a yank he jerked it over him, sack and all. Then, with numbed fingers, he found the cord inside and tied it. It was stifling in the sack. But a wave of peace and contentment possessed him. For the first time in days he experienced an exhilaration of mind and body.

He stretched out his aching body at full length. Beautiful objects began to float across

his vision . . . the face of Anne Marlowe . . . flowers . . . the sunlight. . . . Just as the first plaintive notes of taps reverberated through the prison yard he sank into a sweet, peaceful opium-like sleep.

CHAPTER X

Duncan Morgan fingered the empty whisky glass and looked into the anxious faces around the table.

"Go on, Morg, tell us what you did when you woke up in that dead bus!" exclaimed One-Eyed Pete. The others, seated about the table on the second floor of the Hi-Hatters' Club, nodded.

"Well," continued Duncan Morgan, "I was bouncing along from side to side in that thing and I couldn't imagine where I was for a moment. Then it all came to me. I knew I wasn't in a grave from the way the hearse was shakin' it up, but I didn't know just how far I was from one. So I begun to untie that string on the sack and pretty soon I had my head out. There was a partition between the driver's seat and part of the car I was in. And the door in the back wasn't locked—because I guess they didn't

figure the resurrection was comin' that night.

"The first thing I knew I was sprawled in the middle of the road and I thought I had busted every bone in my body. But I got up and began to take bearings. It was a moonlight night. I could see the red light of the dead wagon high-tailing it down the road. This gave me a laugh. But I didn't have much time to feel funny, because just then I heard the prison siren and I knew they found that they had an unburied corpse in the morgue and a live one runnin' around loose. I got my bearings from the sound of the siren.

"Anyway, I could see the lights of a near-by town. I was barefoot, an' with that prison nightgown on me. I didn't look exactly snappy to go steppin'. But it was warm. Now, I knew that there was an all-night taxi stand at the railroad station in that town and I knew Red Maguire run that stand.

"I struck out across the field for a highway on the other side that led into town. I figured there would be some milk trucks coming along later in the night and they would go right to the station. I got to the highway, and then I laid down in the bushes near a sharp curve in the road. Pretty soon a truck comes

along and I took a long chance on it being a milk truck. Sure enough it was.

"I tailed it and crawled in between the cans and was almost smashed to death before we got to the depot. The driver stopped right across the street and left the truck there, while he went into a one-arm joint for some coffee. He left his overcoat on the seat.

"I found a pair of rubber boots in the back and I was fixed pretty. Soon I was hikin' across the street and over to the taxi stand. I got right in the cab. The driver took one look at me and was going to run, but I mentioned Red Maguire and told him cold who I was and promised him a century to drive me here. He said he'd see and I thought he was going to turn me up. He drove down the street and went into a restaurant and called somebody on the telephone.

" 'Red says it's okay,' he says when he comes out. I breathed again. Then we started for the big burg and here I am. Eh, Tom?"

Tom, the driver, grinned.

"He's some driver!" exclaimed Morgan.

"Let's have another drink—good luck, Morg!"

"Good luck—say, get me some clothes and a

razor. And call that lazy mouthpiece of mine—Michael Dunn."

In the Hi-Hatters' Club Morgan felt safe again among his friends. The club was under protection and ran all night. It was five o'clock in the morning, and downstairs he could hear the thump-thump of the orchestra and the creaking of the dance floor as the guests made merry.

It was the hang-out for the gang, and the leader, Dapper Danny Duber, operated it as a "tip-and-toss." And it was one of the fastest gyps of its kind in the city. Every customer was appraised as he came in and the gang tried to take him not only for all the cash he had in his pocket, but for any checks or "paper" that could be found or obtained.

For instance, a man's bill was ninety-eight dollars after he had had a few rounds of drinks. If he protested it, the smooth proprietor tried to reason with him and assure him that he had ordered drinks for all the girl entertainers and boys of the orchestra. If he protested still, he was turned over to the bouncer who cleaned out his pockets as he hustled him in an undignified way through the door. Outside, it was useless for him to appeal to the cop on the corner as

he was "on the in" and might threaten to pick him up for intoxication, and usually made that plain.

And then, too, there was the "nip-up" check gag. If a fellow couldn't pay and asked for a blank check it was graciously given him, or if he had one and was drunk the head man offered to write it. The boss filled out the amount himself, leaving the numerals so he could raise them after the customer had staggered on. Then, later as a gesture of contempt for payment and to keep the other from stopping payment the next day when he was in more sober mood, the boss would appear with what purported to be the check and tear it up before the customer's very eyes.

"You act like a regular guy and we'll trust you till next time," he would be told. "You wouldn't want your bank to see that signature." But the check would be presented at the bank the first thing next morning, with another zero added to the end of the amount. Did the gypped one ever kick? Rarely. He had to accept his trimming, as it reflected on his own weaknesses. Anyway, if he did kick, it would do little good.

Morgan, who was still weak and tired, but



A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. *The Big House.*

MORGAN, KENT AND OTHER PRISONERS ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR STATED TIME FOR STARTING OF THE RIOT.

who did not want to turn in until he had seen his "mouthpiece," took a stroll downstairs to the café proper after he had dressed and shaved. He peered in the door and saw plenty of activity there. A dignified old fellow was leaning back in his chair, his hair tousled, his shirt collar open, snoring loudly.

Dapper Danny walked over to Morgan and said:

"Want to see some fun! This old guy has been coming here for a week now. He's president of the Fifth State Bank. Got nothin' but dough. We're going to take him proper this time."

Waiters were busy carrying in empty champagne bottles and stacking them around the table. Six young women in evening gowns, the "hostesses" of the dive, grouped themselves around the table. Empty glasses were in abundance. The five men of the orchestra removed their coats and unbuttoned their shirt collars.

Then, at a word from Dapper Danny, the music started. The girls began to sing and two of them began to arouse the old fellow. He awakened with a start and blinked his bleary old eyes. The cabaret was deserted but for

those around his table. Dapper Danny approached.

"Have a good time, Mr. Rouky?" he asked amiably.

"Good time!" stormed the old fellow. "What time is it?"

"Oh, it's nearly seven. You sure had a great night of it. You run us out of champagne."

"I—*I,* er— What did you say?"

The old fellow tried to get up.

"Just one more little drink, daddy," one of the lipsticked ladies urged.

"Drink hell, let me get out of here!"

"Well," smiled the amiable Dapper Danny, "I'm going to buy the house a drink. But after Mr. Rouky has settled his bill."

"Bill? How much is it?"

"Oh, not so much—you bought out the orchestra and the boys have played themselves blue in the face. Let's see, you had forty-two bottles of champagne at thirty smackers a bottle—we'll call it square at fifteen hundred bucks. How's that!"

"Fifteen hundred what—where's my chauffeur—call Jim in here——"

Jim came in, but Jim had already been paid for his end of the lying, and he didn't want his

block knocked off, and he sadly shook his head.

"I tried, sir, to get you out," he said. "But you told me to go to hell—you was having too good a time."

"Just sign a check for it and everything will be all right," gently persuaded Dapper Danny. The banker, whose business was checks, readily agreed. It was only seven. That check would be stopped before they got it to the bank. He signed it.

"One drink on the house," genially called Dapper Danny.

But that drink was heavily loaded—for Mr. Banker. He gulped it and then lapsed into a lethargic sleep. Peraldehyde—the old knock-out drops. And meantime, Dapper Danny instructed a man to wait right outside the bank until the doors opened. He hardly expected Mr. Rouky to come to before long after nine o'clock.

"Say—what easy picking there is in this game," enthused Dapper Danny. "These guys ain't got no comeback at all."

"Funny that lawyer ain't here yet," commented Morgan, growing restless.

"Get yourself straightened out, boy," said Dapper Danny. "We got some good prospects

for you. We'll lift plenty. But you better be careful and don't get nailed."

Morgan nodded listlessly. He heard his name and turned to see the beaming little lawyer, Michael Dunn.

"How'd you work it, Morgan?" he asked, drawing up a chair.

"The first thing," began Morgan, "is this: Did you find where that girl lived?"

"Yes," answered Dunn. "But——"

"Where?" asked Morgan, sternly.

CHAPTER XI

For a month now, John C. Everett had been coming into the little shop of Anne Marlowe—"Latest Modes and Manners in Books—Circulating Library." Mr. Everett was a genial, well-dressed young man with coal-black hair, horn-rimmed glasses, a small mustache, a winning smile, soft spoken, conservatively dressed in blue serge suit, black shoes, gray fedora hat, black tie and white soft shirt.

He had a passion for reading books on foreign travel, asked many questions concerning various authors, frequently mispronouncing their names, evinced an avidity to learn, and was never bold. Anne Marlowe had taken a fancy to him. She almost felt as though she were his teacher, and she picked out books for him and waited anxiously for his original and sometimes humorous criticisms on them.

It would have been hard for any of the old

gang even to have recognized in John C. Everett the old Duncan Morgan. In the old days he had dressed conspicuously, affected a swagger, and could look any cop directly in the eye.

Morgan had changed in other than outward appearance.

His original idea of revenge on Kent had softened into a certain magnanimity. The generosity of the victor, because Morgan felt now that he would win the love of Anne Marlowe, and to know Anne Marlowe even a desperado like him could never think of doing anything to hurt or harm her. She inspired only the tenderest consideration. Morgan's love bloomed tenfold.

While he was "laying low" until the first spasmodic search for him by the authorities would have died down a bit, Morgan was, in truth, "stalling" his own gang. He had no intention of turning again into crime. His one hope now was to go away where he could live the life of other men, have nothing to fear—and be with the woman he loved.

Before, he had dreamed of Anne Marlowe as something completely out of his reach, as something almost cherubic and too far beyond his sphere of life for him to ever hope to find a

mutual level. But, knowing her, he realized that, after all, it was not impossible for him to win her. She was so kind and sympathetic and encouraging—and interested.

One evening, as the late September dusk came on quickly, Duncan Morgan, or John C. Everett, a book under his arm, as was his custom, walked into the little shop, which was just three steps off the sidewalk. He had formulated a resolution in his mind, but he had formulated the same resolution time and time before. Always Anne Marlowe met his dark, searching eyes without embarrassment, and the words died on his lips.

He did not know how to approach her, and his self-consciousness made it the harder for him. Other women in his life had been easy. Sometimes a nod of the head, other times merely a look, and other times it was already understood between them before they met. But those women meant so little to him—even Ruby Barlow, who considered herself his girl, and whom he had "given the air" this time, meant nothing.

But he entered the shop resolutely and found Anne Marlowe reading a letter. A single glance told him that she was worried. But

when she looked up her face lighted into a smile of welcome.

"Oh! Good evening, Mr. Everett," she greeted.

"Good evening, Miss Marlowe," and off with his hat.

"You're late to-day——"

"Yes, a bit—but I'm flattered that you notice it."

"I—yes, I have—but what book can I get you this time?"

"What do you recommend?" and Morgan took heart at her apparent embarrassment.

"H'm . . . well, let me see . . ."

Anne walked over to the bookshelf and Morgan watched her—noted with pleasure the supple movement of her graceful body, her slender white neck, her businesslike, black, bobbed hair. She turned.

"Here's a book by Dostoievsky, *Crime and Punishment.*"

Morgan stepped back instinctively as she held it out to him. Then he laughed and held up his hand.

"No, thanks—give me something on the Hawaiian Islands."

"Novel?"

"Yes, something new—the latest thing."

"I mean fiction—truth or imagination?"

"Give me the truth—nothing but the truth. Something describing the islands—the life there."

"Oh, you are not going to leave us—Mr. Everett!"

"Yes, maybe—sometime. They say it's a great little place to make a new start—I mean—there are great chances there for a fellow who wants to work hard."

"I'll have to take a look through my catalogues."

"Oh, I don't have to have it right away."

"Then you are not planning to go so—soon?"

Both of them laughed.

"No, not until certain things are settled."

He looked at her significantly. Anne Marlowe dropped her eyes, but then raised them a bit, inquisitively, as though she wished to know whether he meant just what she thought he meant. Morgan tried to convey the answer in his own eyes, but Anne apparently read nothing or too much there, for she said hurriedly:

"I am making some coffee in the stock room —won't you have a cup?"

"Sure," answered Morgan.

In the stock room were a table, three chairs, and the delicious aroma of fresh coffee. Anne busied herself setting the table and Morgan watched her with a furtive wistfulness. He sat in the chair and threw his hat on a pile of books.

"This is sure my idea of home," he sighed.

"Home?" laughed Anne.

"Yes—home . . . where I can sit on one side of the table and look across at—you."

There it was—out at last! He felt the blood fountain to his face. Anne's laugh now was a bit nervous.

"It's rather crowded," she parried.

"Not half enough," desperately.

Anne avoided his eyes now.

"One sugar—I believe."

"Yes—from one girl—the one girl."

"Oh, Mr. Everett, I have been giving you too much romance to read."

"No, Anne," and Morgan leaned forward. "This is not fiction nor imagination—I——"

"Mr. Everett, I would like to ask you some-

thing," interrupted Anne sternly. Morgan relaxed and nodded.

"It's about—it's about someone I know—a boy who's in trouble. He's in prison——"

"Ah, prison!"

"Yes, do you know anything about prisons —I mean prison laws?"

"Prisons and laws—h'm—well, yes—a bit— I mean, a little."

CHAPTER XII

Anne Marlowe fumbled the letter and Duncan Morgan's face hardened. He knew it was a letter from Dean Kent—he could recognize on the plain white envelope the prison stamp. Still, he felt that the tremor in the girl's voice indicated pity more than love—he instinctively felt it with that keen perspicacity of the lover and the shrewd observer.

"What can be done to get a man out of prison?" Anne asked with earnest innocence. Morgan regained his composure. He sipped his coffee and then leaned back.

"That's a tall order, Miss Marlowe," he began. "First an executive pardon from the Governor——"

"That's been tried."

"The parole board."

"That, too."

"H'm—I'm afraid there's nothing left."

"Nothing?"

"No—he must do his stretch—that is, serve his time—his term. Is it someone you care about—very much?" with hopeful lack of hope.

"I—I—don't know. I thought so—once. It's a sort of duty. Excuse me, I hear someone in the shop."

Anne hurried out. Morgan smiled happily. He listened idly to the conversation on the other side of the partition.

". . . Good evening, Miss Marlowe."

"Good evening, Sergeant."

Sergeant! A cop!

"I thought 'twas past your closing time—I tried your door and found it open."

Morgan's first impulse was to escape.

"No, everything's all right. I was just having a cup of coffee before closing the shop."

"Ah, and so you were—it sure smells good on a night like this."

"Can't I offer you a cup?"

"Well now, Miss—that's mighty kind of you—but——"

Just like a bull!

And Anne Marlowe did insist. Morgan knew that she was now probably afraid to be alone with him. Had he been too hasty—too im-

pulsive! He didn't know how to handle this sort of jane. Maybe he should have been more careful—not so speedy. He heard the heavy clods of the policeman approaching the stock room.

Fear again swept through him—terrifying, galvanic. But he must control himself. When they entered he arose casually and smiled complacently—an expression utterly belying the terrific fear in his breast. The policeman, seeing him, hesitated.

"Excuse me, ma'am—I didn't know you had company."

"That's quite all right," Anne hastened to assure him. She waved toward Morgan. "Mr. Everett—Sergeant Donlin." The Sergeant held out his great, hardened hand. His blue eyes looked intuitively, inquisitively, into Morgan's. A habit of coppers! They look that way at everyone. Morgan shook hands leisurely, sinking into his chair.

As the policeman talked he glanced now and then at Morgan. Or maybe Morgan was overconscious. But he managed to conceal his nervousness. Finally Donlin arose and left, and Morgan wheezed a sigh of profound relief as Anne went to let him out.

When she returned she showed Morgan plainly that she did not care to continue their conversation—showed him in a polite way, however, by making preparations to close the shop. She took her coat from the hanger and laid it on the chair, and Morgan arose to help her. He mustered up courage to say:

"May I see you home, Miss Marlowe? It's rather late."

"Oh, thank you," Anne looked directly into his eyes a bit fearfully. "But my brother is coming for me—I just heard his horn outside."

Morgan was desperate. But he did not want to make a false move.

"You—you were not offended at the way I spoke, were you, Miss Marlowe?"

"No—no," she laughed nervously, as she put on her turban in front of the mirror and tucked in a few stray locks.

"I am a bit blunt, perhaps," Morgan was making an imaginary design on the table with his finger.

Anne did not answer.

"I could not hold back what I was saying," Morgan continued, not daring to look at her. "You are so different from the kind of

women I have always known—so genuine, so right——"

Anne had picked up her coat. Morgan took it gently from her and held it. He was careful not to allow his hands to touch her in any way as she slid her arms into it. He wanted her to retain in him such confidence as could still survive. She thanked him with a glance and assembled the coffee cups.

"I'm not a very good housekeeper," she apologized, "I'm going to let my dishes go until to-morrow."

"To-morrow's Sunday," reminded Morgan.

"Oh, so it is!" exclaimed Anne. She made as if to say something else, but restrained herself.

Morgan accompanied her to the front of the shop.

"Oh, you didn't get your book!" she exclaimed.

"I'll—I'll take that one by Dusty—what was his name?"

"Oh, Dostoievsky—*Crime and Punishment!*"

"Yes, that's the one."

"It may not be such pleasant reading—for one who likes the Hawaiian Islands."



A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. *The Big House.*

BUTCH'S GANG COME SWEEPING TOWARD THE FRONT GATE WITH THEIR GUNS DRAWN.

But there was no ambiguity in her tone.

She was ready now to close the shop. Morgan went out the door first. He wanted to fight for every second of their parting. He would not see her until Monday.

"Oh, there's my brother, now!"

Standing at the curb was a small car with a young man at the wheel. He reached over and threw open the door.

"Mr. Everett, my brother."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Marlowe," greeted Morgan, extending his hand.

They shook hands. Anne got into the car. Morgan still stood, his hand on the door.

"I'll be in Monday and tell you what I think of *Crime and Punishment,*" he said.

"Wouldn't you like to come out to my home some Sunday—to-morrow if you like?" Anne's voice trembled.

"Would I?" enthused Morgan. "To-morrow?"

"Sure, to-morrow—we live in the suburbs—there's always a crowd—everybody takes pot-luck and we have a lot of fun—really."

"I'll be there!"

Anne Marlowe was writing the address.

"One o'clock," she instructed.

"Oke!—I, er mean—just perfect for me—I'll sure be there with bells on."

Anne smiled happily, and in her eyes Morgan read something which puzzled him and cheered him. He did not have to ask himself how he felt. He was head over heels in love. And she—she—well, Morgan had done some big things on a little hope and a lot of concentration.

CHAPTER XIII

Duncan Morgan turned and walked away as Anne Marlowe and her brother left in the car. He tucked his book under his arm and started homeward, happier than an acquitted guilty prisoner. Just as he was turning into the street where he lived, he felt a hand on his arm. He whirled and started for his gat. A pert little Irish face peered into his.

"Hello, Ruby," he said, coldly.

"Is that the kind of greeting to give your baby?" asked the girl, pouting. "Gee, Dunk, I heard you took the fence out o' stir and I've been playin' every side road to find you. Why didn't you come straight to Ruby?"

"I can't come straight—I have to lay low, Ruby. I don't even see any of the mob. I dassen't." He paused and looked around warily. "The first thing the dicks would do would be to tail you. Don't you know what

they say, 'Find the woman'? They knew as soon as I got back I'd gallop for you. Don't you get it, Kid, I got to bum-steer the coppers."

"Yes—I don't see." Ruby's tone was a little hard.

"You do see, Ruby—let's get off this street quick. I'll make you see. They're probably tailing you right now, and they'll know me the minute they see me. Let's duck in this restaurant."

They entered the restaurant and Morgan selected a table in the far rear. Ruby sat down and looked at him accusingly.

"Well, I'm waiting until you give a better excuse for not looking me up," she said. "You could have sent me some word. You never had a better friend, Dunk; you know it, too."

"Listen, Ruby," and Morgan reached out and took her hand. "Don't torch. I'm off my nut now, tryin' to dodge the flatfoots. You know what it means for me to go back to stir—do you? It means sixty days in the cooler—God, sixty days. I just finished thirty when I escaped."

"Well, what the hell do you hang around this burg for? Let's blow. I've got some jack

I've been putting' aside and we can burn up the tracks."

"No, I've got to stick here."

Ruby jerked her hand away.

"Some jane has got you! That's the only thing that'd make you take a chance around here. And you tryin' to pull that stuff on me —I know you."

"Now, take a load o' this, Mamma." Morgan's voice was steely cold. "Cut the melodrama, you hear? You're just like any other twist to me. I never made you no run-o'-the-play contract, an' you ain't got no leash on me, see? I'll live my own rotten life in my own rotten way. You come around with this high-power stuff, and I'll tell you something. I got the inside straight. While I was in stir you was around with that Canada Pete. Don't tell me no bedtime stories."

"But I don't give a whoop for him!" and Ruby screwed up her face.

"None of the weep stuff, Kid. Now plant here nice an' quiet. Let me do the business for the team. I'm goin' straight and I don't want no spare tires hung on me. That's cold duck. Maybe you like me, an' maybe you don't. You've gone for plenty ahead o' me, an' you'll

go for plenty yet. I broke your heart—for two hours."

"Oh—yeh? I'm not tryin' to cop you from that dumb dame, but——"

"Chop it! Shut up!" Morgan stormed.

"Listen, Dunk, you're goin' to hear it and you're goin' to like it. I'm going to do the talkin' from now on——"

"Say, I'll bust you right on your beezer, you small-time chump——"

"I'm your friend, Dunk; can't you understand?" Ruby was pleading. "Pay some attention to me. The gang's got wind of this quick one you're pullin'. This moral idea. You better watch where you step, or somethin' is gonna fall on you. Do you think you can quit a gang cold, after all they've gone down the line for you—" and, ominously—"aw, you know! Use your head, Dunk. I'm for you. So you're blowin' with your Christian lady friend and livin' as straight as a sucker! Try an' get away with it. You belong with somebody like me."

Tears came into Ruby's eyes. She did not brush them away or try to hide them, but looked bravely through them and never took her eyes off Morgan.

"Gee, Kid, I'm sorry. I'm right this time, but I hate to knock you off."

Morgan reached for her hand again. She allowed him to hold hers, but gave no response.

"Never mind takin' anything back, Dunk. I'm only tryin' to help you."

"Well, why should the gang crab? They know I'm hidin' out. I can't advertise I'm in town——"

"Yes, but you know that outfit. They've got you spotted."

"Well, I don't give a damn what they've got! I'm through with them and I'm going to live my way."

He pounded the table with his fist.

"What if they did smear a little do-re-mi to try to get me out of stir, and what if they did stake me with a little mazooma? Most of what they had planted away I helped grift, anyway. I took the rap for that big job, didn't I? What the hell are they belly-achin' about?"

"I'm tippin' you, Dunk, that's all. I tell you that bunch won't let you walk out. They think you know too much. Are you blind, or just dumb?"

Morgan shrugged his shoulders. "Well, Kid,

we'll have to shoot the roll. I can't leave town —now."

"Won't the jane go with you? I'd go. I think she's a lucky tramp at that."

"Maybe she don't count it up that way," Morgan laughed.

Ruby's voice dropped into a solemn tone.

"Dunk, I heard them guys babblin' last night at the Hi-Hatters. They know where you live. That's all. They been pipin' off that hide-away. I know you been goin' to that bookstore and I know you're nuts about that broad——"

"Lady, Ruby."

"Lady. But they don't know nothin' about that, an' maybe don't care, I guess. But you don't want to get her hooked in, do you? So just move out—pull the old double taxicab stunt on them. Or, I think that's the best thing—go down and see them, or call up Dapper Danny."

"I won't call up nobody—let them come to me!"

"But you'll move so's they can't tail you, an' nail the girl——"

"Yes, Kid, I'll do that. I don't want her messed up in this."

"You wouldn't—you always was a prince."

"But what the hell started all this? How did the gang know anything about me wantin' to switch an' turn shoe clerk?"

"It's them books you're carrying around, Dunk," said Ruby.

"But that's a part of my make-up——"

"Not when you sit and read 'em—in the park."

"Whose business is it what I read and where?"

"Well, they got to p'tect themselves—you might as well go crosser as go crazy!"

CHAPTER XIV

It was Duncan Morgan's second Sunday at the Marlowe suburban home. He had seen Anne every day during the past week, and each meeting had brought them closer and closer together. He had followed Ruby Barlow's advice and had changed his rooming house. It was more convenient now, anyway, for he had settled more closely to the bookshop. Saturday night Anne had said:

"Of course you will be out to-morrow."

"And how!"

They both laughed and both blushed.

"It's home to me, now," Morgan said.

"Mother and Father think so much of you —they like you more and more——"

"And I like them, too, Anne—very much. And you—how do you feel toward me?"

"I? I—like you—because you are so handy with the ice cream freezer."

And, in fact, on his second visit he was again assigned to the task of freezing the ice cream for dinner. He was busily engaged in turning it, humming all the time, when Anne came up.

"Hello, Anne," he called, "I'm almost through. Lady, I get a kick out of this. When I was a kid, there was a family in our neighborhood who used to make ice cream every Sunday—a bunch of us would sit on the fence with our tongues hanging out. How rich we thought they were. Once they let us taste it. And I swallowed mine so fast it made me sick. Funny how such things break in life, isn't it?"

He continued to turn the handle of the freezer.

"John—John—" faltered Anne.

At the sound of her voice Morgan leaped up and caught her by the arm.

"What—is it, Anne?"

"I—I was just talking to Mother," she began in a voice which seemed on the verge of breaking. "I was telling her that I had explained to you all about Dean and had asked your advice about getting him out——"

"Yes, yes, but why should all this make you so unhappy?"

"She wanted to know if I had told you I

intended marrying him when he came out. She thought I should tell you—she said it was only fair."

"Yes," Morgan's voice was low. He scraped the toe of his shoe in the earth floor and swallowed hard.

"But I don't intend marrying him, John," Anne looked up into his eyes, a suppliant. Morgan could not contain himself. The next thing he knew he had her in his arms, her warm, soft body close to his.

"Anne—Anne I love you so!"

He kissed her again and again. Her lips were yielding and half parted. She had lost all resistance.

"Let me go, John—please," she begged.

She seemed terrified at his passion. Then his burning kisses awoke in her a response and she clung to him and kissed him, too. She became more passive and freed a long, deep sigh. Morgan's sense of possession was now complete, and he held her away from him so that he could look upon her beautiful upturned face. Her lips were crimson with his kisses and her eyes were limpid and half closed.

"Oh, my Anne, how I love you—how I have loved you! So long—longer than I could tell

you—harder than you could understand——"

"And I love you, too, John. I did from the first—and even then it seemed—it—wasn't the first."

She drew herself away from him.

"John, let us be sane for a moment," she said. "You must guide and guard me. I have told you everything now—everything about Dean. The thing has worried me unspeakably. I have felt that it was my duty to him to wait for him. I did feel that I loved him when he was sent to prison, but long since I have found that I didn't. Until you came I never had the grit to admit this to myself. But, John——"

She laid both hands into his.

"Anyway, now, I could never marry an ex-convict. Oh, it would be too terrible."

Her words sank like shafts into Morgan's soul!

He drew back from her.

"—never marry an ex-convict!"

He was staring at her with eyes which tried not to comprehend. At last he had her and he had no right to her. Why should he shackle her with the weight of his own stigma? Why had he waited until now, until this moment to

tell her? Why had he been too yellow to give her the truth? His head sank into his hands.

"John—John—" Anne arose, terrified. "What's the matter, John?"

"Don't touch me!" he cried, as he arose and stalked back and forth before her. "Don't come near me. You don't know who I am! I should have told you. Oh, Anne, I meant to tell you. Why did I wait!"

"What—what is it, John? Nothing can matter!"

Anne had caught his arm and her face, reflecting her panic, was close to his. He stopped and held her away from him. His voice was hard and cold. Passionless now—his voice.

"Anne, I am an ex-convict! Not once, but twice. And now I am an escaped convict. I was in prison with Kent. I was in the very cell with him. It was through him that I knew of you and made up my mind to hunt you out!"

He paused. Anne was facing him in a dazed manner.

"I found you and all this happiness—a home—things I had never known before. It all changed me. It made me see everything with new, clean eyes, from a new angle—on women, on everything, Anne. I'm sorry I made you

love me. The Big House couldn't hold me in when I wanted something; how could you?"

"You mean—we had no right to make love—it was my fault, too," Anne's voice was empty, colorless. Her hands hung listlessly to her sides. Her face was lifeless and there was a strange, ghastly look in her eyes.

"You think you can forgive me?"

"Yes."

"And forget?"

"Yes."

"And I'll go away—far away—to the Hawaiian Islands."

"Yes."

"And the thoughts of you always will keep me straight, Anne—always. Good-by."

He turned and stumbled away, and didn't look back. Anne stood in the same spot. As he started she piped an inarticulate moan and sank to the ground. Her mother's voice, cheerful, teasing and benign, called:

"You children must not forget to turn that ice cream freezer. It must be hard and cold."

"Hard—hard!" gasped Anne, inaudibly.

"Cold!" groaned Morgan, as he fumbled for his hat.

He couldn't find it.

CHAPTER XV

Duncan Morgan walked all the way into the city. He was hatless and there was a loco look in his eyes. People turned and stared after him. But he walked alone, with no one near him, for he heeded not a soul. Everything in him seemed numb. . . . What his thoughts were on that dizzy trek he could never afterwards reassemble. . . . He did not think. . . . He had left Anne groggy on the ground and he, himself, was unconscious—yet he had control of his muscles. How useless they were now—what strength had they lent him in his greatest crisis?

He gained his room somehow and flopped across the bed. He lay there for hours, inert, unable to move, not caring whether he was alive or dead. How long he remained like that he did not know, but finally he was aroused by his landlady, who handed him a telegram.

He stared at it through filmed eyes, and then slowly opened it. He glanced to the end first, and saw it was from Anne.

He read:

JOHN WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS SAYING NOTHING MATTERS MAN I LOVE YOU COME TOMORROW FORGET TONIGHT NO DON'T FORGET TONIGHT

ANNE.

Morgan sat on the edge of his bed and gazed into space. What should he do? Had he the right to subject her to life such as he could give her—the life of a hunted outlaw? If they could go away and begin life anew! But would the gang and the bloodhounds let them? "Nothing matters man;" she had written—and she had meant it.

He had no idea of the time, but after hours of uncertainty he fell back on the bed and sank into a violent slumber. He was awakened by a loud knocking. It was daylight without.

"Mr. Everett!" a voice called. He went to the door.

"There is a young lady to see you—she says she must talk to you."

"I'll be right down," Morgan answered.

He threw some water at his face and combed his hair. His eyes were bloodshot and swollen. His heart was going like a runaway engine.

Downstairs he found Ruby.

"My God, Dunk, get out of this burg, quick —they're goin' to put you on the spot to-night."

"Yeah?" slowly enunciated Morgan, in a tone of distaste. "And why are they goin' to put me on the spot?"

"They blue-printed it last night. They got an idea that you are bargaining with the district attorney to turn up the whole gang an' get a pardon. They'd give you the mercy o' Judas. Take it on the lam!"

"Ruby, I can't go—now."

"My God, Dunk, you've *got* to go! Don't you understand what I mean? They're goin' to settle you!"

"Yes, I know, but it's too late. I'll see them and talk to them—they can't do this—not to Dunk."

"The boat has sailed, Dunk, and if you did they'd know I wised you and they'd croak me. Dapper Danny said okay, an' that's the last word."

"Well, let them go through—maybe it's best after all."

"Ain't you got no fight left in you?" Ruby was disgusted.

"No. I'll take it—it'll straighten out a lot of things."

"Come on, snap out of it—Dunk!"

Ruby was aggressive—insistent. She tore at him by the arms and looked into his sad, listless, chin-down face.

"Oh, so the skirt gave you the air, eh?" she said knowingly. Then: "Well, you've always got Ruby—you cheatin', good-lookin', crooked, twist-twisted fox."

Morgan looked into her liquid brown eyes. He was about to say something when he heard the doorbell jangle. They were in the small parlor, just off the hall. They heard the landlady's voice, like grinding brakes, topping the gruff voices of men.

"We know he's in here!" one insisted.

"But, there's no Mr. Morgan here. This is no bank."

"Morgan or whatever his name is—he's here. An' we're here—so you get to hell out o' here."

One of them kicked open the door to the parlor.

"Look here, Mike—the love birds."

Four men walked in.

"Well, we got you, Morgan. We knew the jennie'd come pussydoggin' to you sooner or later. Her trail is as intrikkit to pick up as a camel in a phone booth."

"You dirty—" began Ruby.

"Here, hold this little mick while I click the come-alongs on Morgan."

"Let me go!" screamed Ruby, "I'll tear your eyes out!"

But one of the detectives held her fast. Morgan felt the cold bracelets on his wrists. He never flinched. He just tossed Ruby one look.

"Oh, Dunk, I never knew they was followin' me!" cried Ruby. "I swear a dyin' oath——"

He ignored her. To the dicks he said:

"Well, what's the delay?"

"Don't do no Houdini, or we'll lay you out, Morgan," warned the detective who held him by the arm, a gun in his other hand.

"Sink the gat—I ain't drunk," shot Morgan.

Ruby was hysterical.

"Let me go, you lousy bulls! Why don't you leave a square guy alone—when he wants to go straight you won't let him. You blood-suckin' bedbugs——"

"Shut up that little slut," ordered one of the men. "And you," he indicated another,

"phone headquarters that we've nailed Morgan. We'll take no offsides with him, tell them I said so—we'll hand him right down there, trussed an' tied."

"Uhuh—you can't win," sneered Morgan.

"Dunk, ain't there somethin' I can do?" pleaded Ruby.

"Much obliged—you've done enough!"

"But you don't blame me—you don't think——"

"No, you was trying to warn me."

"I was, I was, I swear it on me dead Irish mother's immortal soul——"

Morgan hesitated. Then:

"Yes, tell *her* how it happened. Tell her my right name, everything—tell her to forget me. They'll give me four more years on my sentence and they'll start me with sixty days in the hole—I'll never beat the stir, now."

"Well, come on and quit that yowlin'," the detective ordered.

"I'll tell her, Dunk," called Ruby, as they pulled him away. The fourth detective remained with her on the doorstep. "I'll tell her what a right guy you are and how lucky she'll be to get you after you work off your stretch."

"Good-by, Ruby. I—I believe you."

"Good-by, Dunk—God look after you——"

Ruby's voice trailed off into a moan. The detective had to support her boneless figure. A small crowd had gathered and heads poked out of windows along the block. The landlady was wide-eyed with terror and stood in the doorway wringing her hands.

"He seemed like such a gentleman," she said.

"And," sobbed Ruby, "I love him."

"Nevertheless—he seemed like such a gentleman," repeated the landlady.

CHAPTER XVI

When a "fox"—an escaped convict—is caught and brought back to prison, he is thrown into the dungeon for sixty black days and blue nights. Morgan knew this. He was reconciled to it. This time he went into the solitary hole with a resolute will—they could not break him.

He felt assured now of Anne's love, he believed there would be a way for him to get out of prison—some miraculous way—but a way—which would leave him clean and free to take up the life of an honest man.

Word spread through the prison like a forest fire that Morgan, the black sheep, was back. As they marched him through the cell house, stripped to the waist and barefooted, on his way to the cooler, he saw again the old familiar places and faces. Butch's glance flashed a regretful welcome to him.

No one spoke to him. There was a barely

perceptible nod of the head here and there. Then Morgan's dark eyes found out Kent. As he looked at him, he saw Kent's eyes grow wide with fear, and Morgan smiled—a faint, sardonic smile. He would have a lot to tell Kent—later. That would be his revenge!

But in his heart Morgan didn't hate Kent. After they had thrown him into his dark cell where he would spend many long, lonesome hours, he began to reflect on the vicissitudes of life. As a chance encounter sometimes changes the entire course of the span of a man, so had this undestined circumstance in which Kent planted the knife on him changed the entire existence of Morgan.

He traced back each factor in the haphazard scheme: the thirty days in the cooler . . . the hatred in his heart for Kent, which had caused him to take the desperate break at escape . . . the meeting with Anne Marlowe . . . the final impulsive confession of their mutual love . . . the warning by Ruby—the arrest from another source—for no self-respecting crooks would work with cops——

"Everything must have a purpose," mused Morgan, philosophically. "Things look gloomy now. Back in prison now, I can clear myself

forever. Had I married Anne, I would have always lived in deadly horror that some day I would be turned up—a fox. It would have been tougher, knowing how it would wreck her."

But he began to worry about her now. He could communicate with her in no way. Ruby would no doubt explain to her that he had been thrown into the horror chamber as soon as they got him back to prison—or she would come to ask for him and find out of her own accord.

Or—would she come! Had she not had enough heart-hurt and humiliation already with outcast convicts? Possibly she would tear Morgan out of her life forever. Possibly she would be repelled against her love for him—he knew she loved him. But she was not born or built to throw herself away on a jailbird.

No, Morgan did not feel this, although in a dungeon, a disgrace even among convicts, he had faith that she would love him and he would yet justify that love.

Strange, Morgan constantly dreamt of his future happiness. Incongruous as it was, he could picture their little home . . . a cottage bathed in sunlight . . . Anne in her clean, crisp house dress, busy about the kitchen. . . . He

somehow pictured her making coffee and looking at him with smiling inquisitiveness as she said, "It's one lump—Mr. Everett?" . . . and they both laughed. . . . Mr. Everett! . . . Yes, the house was bathed in sunlight, eternal sunlight . . . and then came the day of days and the little spare room in the house, the one with the fairies and the elephants and the bears and the giants painted on the walls, would echo . . .

They wouldn't need much money. Just enough for the staple things of life. It would come in regularly and he would work hard. He must learn the value of money and she must keep a budget . . . like she did in the bookshop. Morgan's black cell became illuminated with the aurora of his future happiness. Nothing could discourage him henceforth. He only waited until he could communicate with Anne in some way—assure her of his love and receive her answer that she would wait for him.

Then a melancholy mood came over him. What right had he to ask this adorable, sensible, desirable woman to wait for him—to spend the better part of her life waiting until he, a number, had finished his punitive prison term? Think of the opprobrium she must bear

—the girl of a con! The smirk of Sergeant Conlin when he saw her on her way to her little bookstore, and when he asked, significantly:

"Well, Miss Marlowe, how are you to-day?"

("How does it feel to wait for your convict lover to finish his term?")

And in her own family circle—what she would have to bear!

Yet out of this miasma of forlorn thoughts always arose the sweet, smiling face of Anne. Her lips seemed to move in the one phrase:

"Courage! Patience! Faith!"

She, herself, was the quintessence of courage. Had she not borne many of these things before—for Kent, a man she really could not love?

Yes, Morgan could see her now, smiling bravely, confidently. He had lived in the other half of the world—among the racketeers, the killers, the crooks—but there he had learned to judge people for their true worth, to read their concealed pages. He could not be mistaken in Anne! And how he wanted to tell her that she need never fear that she could be mistaken in him. So the days and nights went on and each hour Morgan's hope rose. Before, he had nothing worth while to wish for—now as each

minute passed in the dungeon he could see growing brighter and brighter at the end of the time the culmination of it all.

Then, one day, they came down and opened the door and found Morgan on his feet and able to walk out unaided. It is a wonderful thing, the effect of mind and spirit over body. Some have made a religion of it!

When they had allowed him to shave and clean up, he was taken before the Warden. As he stood before the prison head, Morgan looked steadily into the other's eyes as he received his customary lecture. His face was pale and drawn, and there were deep shadows beneath his eyes, denoting the hardship he had outgamed.

"You'll find it tougher here than ever, Morgan," said the Warden. "The state has closed the jute mill and the men have nothing to do—no good, hard work to occupy them. You know what idleness does—I want you to watch your step."

"Yes, sir," rejoined Morgan with a determination which caused Wallace, the captain of the yard, who stood beside him, to sneer. The

Warden gave Wallace a quick glance of disapproval.

"Morgan," the Warden was sympathetic now, "I have always believed there was good in you. You were a fine prisoner before—before that knife was found on you——"

"But, sir——"

"Never mind—that is past. I want you to do the proper thing now. Set a good example for the others. You have personality, a certain influence. It will pay you—that's all."

As Wallace led him out, he sneered:

"The Warden is too soft—you got a bad record, Morgan. We won't take a thing off you. Toe the chalk line, or you'll get all the grief there is inside o' here."

"Yes, sir," said Morgan courteously. Then he added: "Takin' grief is nothin', Wallace. Makin' it is what hurts. I'll be such a model prisoner, it'll get on your nerves!"

CHAPTER XVII

Down in the prison yard, Morgan found Butch—the same old happy-go-lucky Butch. He was talking to a group of his cronies. When he saw Morgan he slowly detached himself from the others, and without any perceptible show of joy walked slowly toward him.

"Hello, ladybug, did you fly away home?" he greeted.

"Hello, Butch." Morgan felt a real affection for Butch. "I was flied right back again."

They started walking along through the yard.

"How's all the dames, Morg? Did you give 'em my what'sis?"

"Sure—all of them. They sent their whosis."

As they ambled along, this one and that hailed a greeting at Morgan. Most of them accepted in a matter-of-fact way his return

among them. Morgan sensed an undercurrent of unrest in the air.

"There's something cockeyed, Butch—what is it?" he asked.

Butch indicated the prison postern with a slight movement of his head. Morgan turned and looked. He saw nothing but the closed grill and the armed guard pacing the other side.

"Six of us is gonna stroll t'rough that gate."

"You're crazy!"

"I'm givin' it to you straight, Morg. Me and Joe framed it."

"Joe? I thought he was a trusty?"

"He is—but he's a con like you an' me. His old bean is been hustlin'. It's his idea." Butch paused and looked around. "There he goes now—pipe him off."

Joe was double-timing toward the gate. When he reached it, he rapped and the guard halted. Joe held up a bunch of flowers. The guard took them through the bars and Joe, smiling and nodding his head, walked away.

"See?" enthusiastically urged Butch.

Morgan shook his head. He could find no significance in this bit of soft pantomime.

"Y'see," Butch explained, "every day for

three months he's been goin' to that gate—with a bunch o' flowers he picks in the garden. That screw's used to him now—don't think nothin' of it."

"Well? No more do I."

"Gee, you're dumb, Morg. Well, every once in a while there's a big bunch of flowers . . . and the screw has to open the gate—savvy?"

"I got it—some mornin' he'll open the gate and six o' you'll crash through—very simple." His tone was ironic.

"What could be simpler?" Butch spoke with all the naïvetté of a child.

"What comes off after you come through?"

"Then we bust through the outer gate—the car'll be waitin' on the outside."

Morgan looked at him in astonishment, but asked merely:

"When does all this come to pass?"

"Thanksgivin' Day—at noon! Most of the screws is off then—for that hot turkey. An' we'll give it to 'em cold turkey—a bellyfull!"

Butch laughed long and loud, and then quickly restrained himself as one of the guards turned suddenly.

"Butch, you're nuts. If you croak anybody it's the chair——"

"What the hell's the difference?—I'm hooked here the rest of me life anyway."

"Who's in on it?"

"Olsen . . . the Hawk . . . Dopey . . . Joe——"

"The Hawk—that means blood and nothing less."

"Naw." Butch appeared hurt at the suggestion. "He swore he won't clip nobody."

"Huh! He croaked his own mother."

"Sure he did." Butch was sympathetic. "He cut the old blister's throat. But he was sorry for it—he pleaded self-defense—he ain't such a bad guy, Morg."

"Who else is workin' this inspired take-off?"

"Let's see—well, Kent."

"Kent?" Morgan frowned.

"Listen, Morg," Butch was confidential. "Me an' Joe give him the lay-on plenty while you was yonder—an' he come clean. He's white."

"Yes?" incredulously. "He's white like your soul."

"An' then, you're in on the blow-off, too."

"Me?" Morgan recoiled. "Not me, Butch. No, thanks. I'm going straight, pal. I don' know a thing about it—not a thing."

"Straight! You ain't turned queer, have you?"

"Cut the kiddin'—what I said goes."

Butch apparently could not believe. He halted in his tracks and peered wide-eyed at Morgan. Then he grinned, knowingly.

"Some jane's pinned a pair o' wings on you, Morg." He spoke slowly, accusingly.

"She didn't pin 'em on—she kissed 'em on. An' they stick!"

"Sweet lips! Well, I won't let the boys know you're a quitter"—he indicated a group of convicts near by. "Don't tell 'em you're headin' straight. I believe you, Lord help me. But they'll make a patsy out o' you."

The Hawk and Dopey walked up.

"So long, good luck," Morgan wafted away. He went to look for Kent. There was a set, convincing look on his drained face. He saw Oliver and walked up to him. Without a greeting, he asked:

"Where's Kent?" . . .

"Cell House Number Three," returned Oliver, staring after him.

Morgan scraped on his way, forging through the crowd of men. At the door of the cell house he saw Kent, coming out with a wheelbarrow

loaded with books and magazines, for they had made him a trusty in the library. When Kent saw Morgan, his face blanched and he suddenly sat down the wheelbarrow. He looked about furtively, as though seeking some means of escape or source of rescue.

"I—I didn't plant that knife on you," his voice was trembling. "It—it was that greaser——"

"You're a God-damned liar. But I don't want to discuss that," returned Morgan curtly. He signaled to Kent and drew him aside.

"Look here, Kent—you're in on that break?"

"Butch peached!" Kent parried.

"Yes—it's dynamite! Not that I give a damn about you . . . but these others are my friends. . . . This thing's a kickback. You're trapped. You ain' got a Chink's chance."

His steady gaze caused Kent to drop his eyes. He faltered:

"You—you don't think—Butch—Hawk—Dopey——"

"I don't have to think. An' you don't know how." Morgan narrowed his eyes, and the look was hard and penetrating. "Lay off—it's the pay off." And he walked on.

As he reached a far corner of the prison

yard, Wallace strolled along after him. Morgan paused and Wallace came close and said:

"What'd you and Butch have so important to talk over?"

Morgan wheeled.

"Lemme be, will you? I done my bit in the hole an' I'm doin' my full in stir——"

"A little more respect in your tone—hear?"

"Pardon me—sir."

"Even the Gov'nor won't do that. An' no flip-flops out o' you, Mr. Morgan, or I'll make you wish your old lady'd never met your old man."

"Yes, sir," said Morgan. "That would be no new wish. They both beat me to it."

CHAPTER XVIII

Morgan walked furiously away. This guard, Wallace, was enough to nag and egg the most resolute man on to murder. He strolled down the yard toward Butch's gang, who were all grouped about something on the wall which had aroused their interests. Morgan found that they had just captured two cockroaches and were about to race them!

"Get down your bets—I'm backin' this mule," Butch cried.

"Ten packs o' weeds on the skinny one," Morgan cut in. Butch greeted him with a nod.

"Come on—cover 'em."

"I'm bettin' two to one on Morgan's pipe cleaner," from Joe.

Chewing tobacco, cigars, cigarette tobacco, papers and tailored cigarettes, all went into the pile. Meantime, Butch drew a big, irregular circle on the wall with a rock. In the other

hand he held his cap, which covered the restless, bewildered cockroaches.

Butch peered beneath the cap and was fingering the insects when a general hubbub arose.

"Oke . . . let 'em ramble."

"Go to it, Butch."

"Come on, you sink sprinters."

Butch raised the cap grandiloquently, and the two bugs were discovered huddling close together. The large one, identified as Butch's, was peppy and active. He raised his small head, shot his feelers out experimentally in several directions, and then shook his pointed face.

"Look at the size of him!" cried Butch, in admiration.

"Speed, not size, wins races," said Morgan.

"Yeah—well, I'll take power."

The brawny cockroach had already begun to crawl. The other appeared anxious to follow, but could not budge. His legs flew out at the sides and his feelers jiggled rapidly.

"Say, Morg, what's the matter with your bug?"

"He's dead!"

"His mind ain't on his business."

Butch was shouting: "Come on, Big Boy—

come on, Sugarfoot—give Morg's nag a kick in the whiskers . . . come on cocky, old roach. . . . Morg's bug is on fly paper."

The large cockroach went over the line. Several cheered weakly. Butch grinned broadly and began to take up the packages of cigarettes and other smoking materials. Morgan just happened to notice, as Butch raised his head, that the Killer was chewing gum. He then looked at his cockroach and saw him still at the starting point.

Morgan was no fool. He walked quietly to the wall and between his fingers he picked up his entry. Sure enough, he was stuck fast! But Morgan wanted to be sure of the culprit. He made a sortie of inspection, looking over every man, but he could find none who was chewing gum save Butch.

He walked toward Butch and their eyes met. Butch gulped once, swallowed the gum, and then grinned sheepishly. Morgan showed the cons the gum beneath the beaten roach. Butch turned angrily on the group.

"Who done that?" he cried. "Who fixed this race?"

"You did!" cried Morgan, a twinkle in his eye. He reached down quickly and snatched up

his ten packages of cigarettes and stuffed them in his blouse.

"Who . . . me?" Butch was offended.

"Yes, you. You doped my stable." His words were met with grumblings in the circle. Several who had lost glared at Butch. The latter's rage was mounting. He swept the faces about him with a menacing look, and asked:

"Who else here thinks I pulled a phony?"

No answer. Then he turned on Morgan.

"You do—do you?"

Morgan nodded. Butch stepped forward. Morgan, unafraid, stood in quiet defiance. His eyes challenged the bigger man's and dared him make another advance.

"I'm a crook, am I?"

"You stuck the gum under that bug."

"Say that again!"

"I say it again—an' you're a thievin' gun."

Butch let out a terrible yell. He started at Morgan, but that party only braced himself.

"Cut it—Wallace!" the cry went up.

Butch stopped in his tracks. Wallace was behind him.

"Now you see," said Morgan, "I get a toe-hold on you, and then I throw you on your back——"

"What are you men doing—fighting?" asked Wallace.

"No, sir, wrestling," from Morgan.

Wallace noticed the pile of cigarettes and tobacco.

"Oh-ho! Gambling?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Butch innocently. "I wouldn't."

"Then how'd all those cigarettes get there?"

"I took them out of my coat while I was wrestling," said Morgan.

"Oh, well," and Wallace leaned over and scooped up all the cigarettes and tobacco and stuffed them in his own pockets. The men began to grumble, but Wallace quieted them with a black look.

When Wallace was out of earshot Butch began cursing. He turned on Morgan.

"You steamed all this up," he bombasted. "You got that screw on us. You called me names I wouldn't take from no man—no man—but you, Morg, my ol' pal—t'anks!"

CHAPTER XIX

A GUARD led Morgan into the small visitors' room. His eyes swept the other section, behind the wire netting. There she was—Anne!

He rushed forward and for a moment he could say nothing. Anne looked at him, in the convict gray; her eyes filled with tears, her head slightly tilted, her hands against the screen.

"Anne!" he said at last.

"Oh, John—" she hesitated, then added: "you are John to me—John Everett—still my John——"

"Anne, how did you know I was loose to-day?"

"The warden—he told me. I had been to see him before. I had a long chat with him. I told him the truth—everything—how I knew you had changed and that you should be given a chance——"

"Sweet Anne—but you don't know prisons——"

"He was so kind and considerate. He believes me and believes that you—he says that he will believe as your conduct convinces him."

The time seemed so short. She told him how she had been incapacitated for a month after the awful news; how Ruby had been her unremitting companion; how Ruby had told her so many fine things about him and had advised her how to act.

"John—John you look so pale—and weak," she sniffled compassionately.

"Oh, that's nothing—I'll be all right in a few days—this will tonic me up."

"But that dungeon—is it as ghastly as Ruby says?"

"No, not at all," Morgan laughed, "it's not half bad—they give you angel cake and the best of water. The dieting really does you good—why, some people of their own accord do worse than that by themselves."

Anne was silent a moment.

"How is Kent?" she ventured at last.

Morgan's face turned hard. But he smiled again with an effort to conceal the emotions.

"Oh, he's all right. He's a trusty now—in

the library. He doesn't have a hard time at all. Haven't you heard from him?"

"Yes, I have received two letters—but I have not even read them. I can't bear to. I feel so—so goosefleshy about it all."

"Don't think of it, Anne, honey. If you don't love him, don't grieve over him. It wasn't your fault that he got here. He will be a different man when he gets out."

"What? How? You mean——"

"Just that he'll be older, his views on life will have changed. He will think in new veins and channels."

"I thought you meant something else."

"But, what else could I have meant?"

"Nothing," Anne bit her lip. "But John—I can call you that, can't I?—John, can't you talk to him for me—tell him the truth? Explain to him that I feel toward him as I always felt, that I want to help him, but that I don't love him and that I never did and I will never marry him."

Morgan looked into her suppliant, generous, feminine eyes.

"I'll tell him," he agreed with slow emphasis. Then: "But, how do you feel, Anne—toward me? Are you willing to sacrifice

years of your young life for me? Do you really believe you care enough? In here we have lots of time to think—and feel. We can't fight for what we want. It will be hell for me if I am not sure. I am selfish.

"To dream and hope and wait that some day I will be free and I can have you, yet to think and fear that after all, you are not sure you want me enough to hold out and keep yourself for a convict——"

"Oh, John, don't talk like that," Anne begged, with tears in her eyes. "I do love you and I will wait for you. I never was surer of anything in all my life. There could be no other man."

"Oh, I love you so, Anne. I have nothing else—you are all—everything—my religion!"

"I'll wait for you, dearest—I'm your—woman. I told Ruby—I lied so she'd—understand."

Her voice trailed off in a sob. How Morgan burned to coil her into his arms and console her, to hold her close, to thank her, bless her, kiss her, dishevel her——

But between them was the cold, hard steel netting of his transgression. At each foot's length was a steel bar. He was in stir!

A guard tapped him on the shoulder.

"Time up, Morgan."

Anne looked at him helplessly, bucked up by only the determination and affection she read in his eyes. She smiled gamely and held her face close to the imperturbable screen. He placed his lips there. He closed his eyes. He felt as if their lips met. He pressed until his lips bled. But it could not be enough. Women's warm mouths are not for cons.

"Good-by, Anne, don't worry," he wept.

"Good-by, John—I'll write you. Believe in me."

Morgan staggered drunkenly through the prison yard without seeing anything. He was rudely aroused by a tug at his arm.

"What's the hurry, pal?" It was Butch. "Remember me at all?"

"Say, Butch," raved Morgan, dizzily, "were you ever in love? I mean on the level—all the way?"

"Me? Well, that's a wicked question to answer. I used to like Sadie—she was a good frail. Sadie never had that bug poison I slipped her comin' to her. Sadie would let me bat her around all night and day and then come

up and kiss me and call me her great, big, rough, playful boy."

"I guess she was in love, all right," sighed Morgan.

"What's eatin' you?" Butch asked, suspiciously.

"Oh, nothin'," shrugged Morgan. "I'll be glad when I'm out of this place——"

"It won't be long now," and Butch nudged him significantly.

"Lay off, Butch!" Morgan's voice was icy with warning.

"Lay off?" exclaimed Butch viciously. "What y'mean, lay off! I been framin' this breeze for months. Everything is copesetti. It's a man-sized job and we're goin' through. You're gassed up on that love stuff, sighin' an' cryin', an' you ain't got no time for us fall-guys who want to see some more life and fun. Lay off! Huh! You cackle like a scared, sick sparro'."

Butch spat in disgust.

"Oh, be yourself—you know me—suppose you do get out, Butch," Morgan's tone was pleading. "What of it? They just collar you again and they make it good an' sweet for you."

"What've I got to lose excep' my life? But if I get out, I ain't goin' to go messin' around no dames," said Butch, disgustedly. "Leave them twists alone an' you'll never get hog-tied. You ain't told me everything, Morg, even though we is pals, but I know how you got brung back. It was through a jennie."

"Come on now, Butch," Morgan stopped him with a cold, threatening look. "That's my affair!"

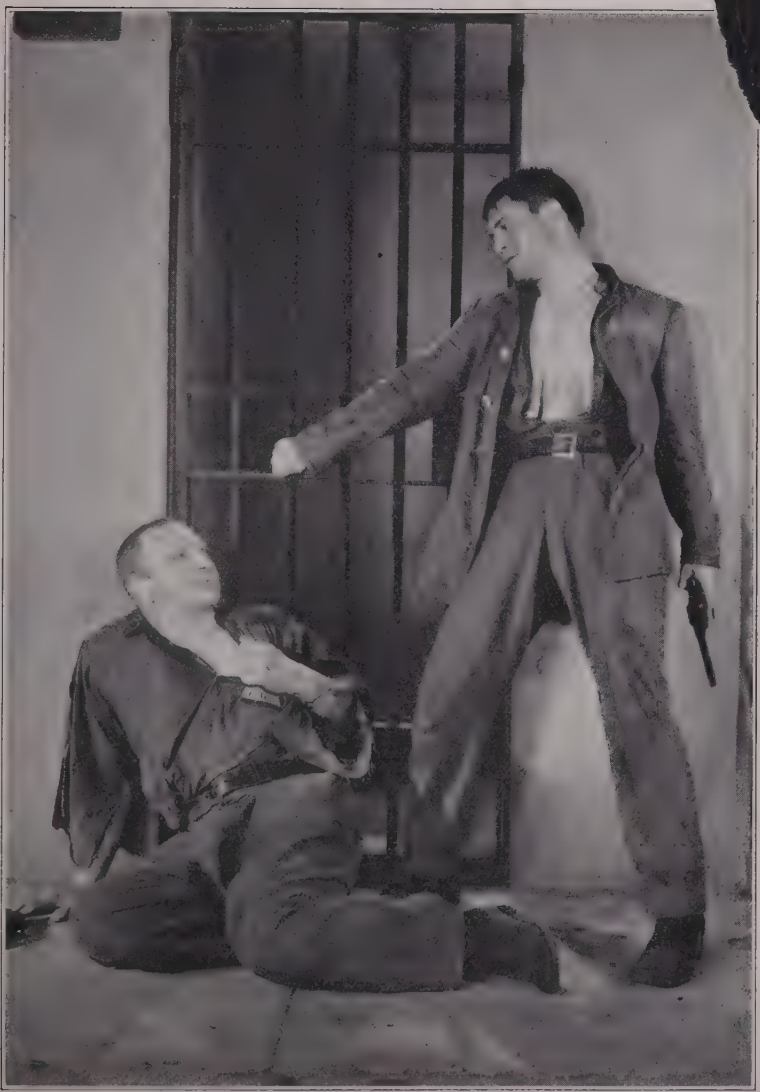
"Don't mean no harm, Morg," said Butch. Though twice the size of the other, and twice as strong, the brutality of Butch bowed down before the grit and personality of the smaller man. Butch actually feared Morgan. More, he respected him.

"Butch, you're my pal—I like you. You've got a big heart in you and I'd trust you further than I would a lot of square suckers—outside a cockroach race—Kent, for example."

"Oh, Kent's a louse, but he'll stay put."

"Will he? I did meet a real woman when I was outside. And she showed me what life meant. I'm living only for her——"

"Oke, Morg, you don't have to tell me. I can't argue with no man as far gone as you,"



A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. *The Big House.*

BUTCH AND MORGAN ARE WOUNDED DURING THE PRISON RIOT.

Butch sadly shook his head. "What's she got to do with Kent?"

Morgan smiled.

"Remember that picture—his opening night?"

"Yeh. No! Not her!"

"Her. Kent thought she was his. Soon he won't. I'm goin' to give that to him on the button. . . . Then see! Every minute I ain't with her is agony. But I'll get her—my *own* way!"

CHAPTER XX

THANKSGIVING morning.

Every seat in the prison chapel filled. The sunlight streaming through the barred windows, falls across gray figures of shaved men huddled on the hard, wooden benches, worn smooth by them and creatures like them.

The prisoners, unconscious of the bitter irony of the songs which liltingly depict the freedom and happiness of heaven and life, sing loudly—glad to release their long corked voices. The prison chaplain, sincere and bromidic, raises his soft hand after the first number and says, singsong:

"And now to send aloft our gratitude on this glorious day of Thanksgiving, let us sing, 'Ring Out the Bells of Heaven.' Everybody rise."

There was a tumultuous scraping of feet and a creaking of benches as the hundreds of pris-

oners came erect. The organ boomed out the introduction. Then came the words and notes from a thousand throats, Butch's giant voice rising above the rest in the thundering anthem of a saved soul——

"Glory! Glory! How the angels sing——"

His face immobile, his gaze dead direct ahead, Butch improvised:

"Big day to-day! We get pig with our beans."

Then, when he came back to the next legitimate stanza, he shouted so loud that the chaplain looked at him in terror:

"*Open the gates! Open the gates!*
Open the gates, and let the King of Glory in!"

The song was finished. Butch sank back, a warped smile on his warped face, and said:

"That's a hot number! Open the gates! Open the gates and let the prisoners out."

His wink traveled down the line, from Dopey to the Hawk, from the Hawk to Joe, from Joe to Olsen. Morgan, who was sitting on the left of Butch, was watching him narrowly out of the corners of his eyes. Butch every now and then nudged his right-hand neighbor, Dopey, and

both looked at the clock. It was eleven-thirty-one.

"At noon," whispered Butch hoarsely, "We'll have something to be thankful for."

"We will bow our heads in prayer," from the chaplain.

"We will pray hard—for freedom," intoned Butch.

There was a general movement throughout the chapel as the men leaned forward. Some made gestures of sincere devotion; others appeared to lampoon, still others disdained to close their eyes or bend their seamed necks.

"Our Father who art in Heaven——"

Butch whispered out of the corner of his mouth:

"Wait for the click of the clock—that'll be *noon!*"

Dopey nodded and passed the word along.

The chaplain ended his prayer. There was a shuffle, a movement of feet, bodies readjusting themselves, then a dead silence. The electric clock snapped. Simultaneously the bells rang merrily in the chapel tower. The prison choir sang another Thanksgiving hymn and the men scrambled to their feet and started out the chapel door, file formation.

At that moment Wallace, the hated Wallace, walked by. He stopped before Butch and Morgan.

"Come here, Morgan," he ordered. "Come with me—I want to see you in my office."

As Morgan followed him, puzzled beyond imagination, he saw Butch's face lighten up in an understanding way, and he nodded his head and whispered to Dopey, indicating Morgan. Morgan vehemently shook his head, and walked on after Wallace.

Wallace led Morgan right through to the Warden's office. The Warden was talking to Pop Riker, the lovable old guard.

"You say Kent told you they had guns?" Morgan heard the Warden ask. Pop Riker nodded.

"Here's Morgan, sir," said Wallace.

"Morgan," began Warden Adams, in a kindly tone, "I hope you are not in on this break. We don't know yet just who is—but we think it's Butch's gang. Do you know whether they have any guns?"

Morgan looked into the Warden's eyes with a steady, unflinching stare.

"Sir," he said slowly, "I don't know what kind of a man you think I am. But whatever

you think, I'm no squealer. I have much to be thankful for—including that I know nothing about this, sir, and would tell nothing if I did, sir."

"Come clean, you low-lived—" began Wallace.

"Just a moment, Captain," said the Warden sternly. "This man is a prisoner, but he has certain rights." He turned to Morgan. "I admire you for your spirit and your code of honor—if you consider it your code of honor. I am making you no promises about opening the gates, nor am I promising you any time off. I do consider it a duty to those men you call your friends and to yourself to save trouble here. That's why I called for you. We know something's in the air. That is all."

Morgan felt the cold perspiration on his forehead. He heard a commotion in the prison yard. The Warden and Wallace ran to the window.

"My God!" cried the Warden, "they've knocked down Deegan at gate and taken his gun from him. Quick—the alarm."

Morgan could see outside, too. Led by Butch, the men, more than thirty of them, had rushed the gate. The big bunch of holiday flowers,

by which Joe had maneuvered to get it open, was scattered about on the stone flooring.

Butch and his gang, yelling like Apaches and waving knives and pistols, were halfway across the yard when the whole prison trembled with the roar of the siren.

Almost at the same time came the deadly rat-tat-tat-tat of the machine gun. Morgan saw the concrete of the wall specked by the bullets which were fired over the men's heads.

The Warden was phoning to the turrets. The words sounded foreign to his gentle voice:

"Shoot to kill!" he cried.

"Rat-a-tat-tat!" crisped the guns, and lead sprayed not only the walls now, but the ground.

The church bells still chimed on. No one had ordered them stopped. And in the big house everything runs by orders—and God help the poor fool who sets himself against them.

CHAPTER XXI

Butch and his men turned back. A half dozen guards, armed with clubs, ran into the courtyard, but they were overwhelmingly stampeded back toward the cell house with the convicts.

Wallace, nudging Morgan in the ribs with his gun, had left the Warden's office. Pop Riker, armed with a bludgeon, followed. The three gained the prison yard just as the convicts swept into it. They were caught in the crowd, flying before the machine guns that spat and spattered, and carried into the cell house.

As they milled into the corridor, the booming voice of Butch clarioned:

"Clean out the arsenal!"

A dozen men darted through the arsenal door, which had been thrown open at the beginning of hostilities. The guard was overpowered and the men passed out the rifles and

ammunition. Wallace, meantime, had been disarmed, and Pop Riker had been knocked down.

"Tie the screws together!" shouted Butch, a ferocious scowl on his face, as he towered above the mob.

"Into the cell house!" shrieked Butch. Driving the guards before them, the convicts crushed and crowded through. Just as the great steel doors clanged shut, the machine guns went into high. An enfilade swept along the side of the prison opposite the Warden's office, where the guns had been hurriedly mounted. There was a crashing of glass. Solid corners of concrete flew into dust, steel struck steel and bullets ricocheted in the cell house. Cries of pain screamed from the wounded and dying.

"Chuck the screws in the hole!" commanded Butch, who was chasing about here and there, posting his armed men at the windows, grated with bars and crossbars welded into cement.

Olsen, a gun in each hand, backed Wallace and the guards to the dungeon door and forced them inside. He stood sentry outside, without closing the door.

There was pandemonium in the cell house. Those who had run in at the first alarm and

who had acted no part in the riot, now were under fire. They dived beneath bunks and huddled in corners. Butch's voice could be heard everywhere.

"Every man with a gat get to the windows! Those who don't want to fight get the hell out of the way. We'll show them tough cell hands what tough means."

Butch was getting things organized. The terrific fire of the machine guns continued to sweep across the prison, and bit by bit the glass of the barred windows was shattered and the walls opposite the windows were indented with the deadly slugs. Morgan was caught between two windows on a tier just above Butch and his lieutenants.

There was a momentary let-up in the fighting. Morgan could hear Butch cursing.

"We've been hi-jacked—it's that Morgan—the son of a——!"

Morgan was about to shout out when there was a deafening roar as the machine guns tore loose again. Morgan realized that this was no time to argue, and that his life was in danger from outside as well as inside.

"Get Curley and Johnson and Ripper out o' Death Row!" shouted Butch above the roar.

"They'll make great battlers—they have to cash in anyway."

Morgan threw himself flat on the tier floor. He was directly above Butch. The latter's next words made his blood curdle.

"Ripper was to take the juice to-morrow in the chair—I've got a thought—we'll cook Wallace!"

The death chamber was just off the cell house, Morgan knew. Two men already had started to carry on as Butch had ordered. They returned triumphantly with the three condemned men, who were pale, trembling and gibbering.

"Here's your chance, boys!" Butch shouted. They were issued guns. Meantime, others ran to the cells and dragged out mattresses to pile against the windows. Now and then could be heard the dull smack of the bullets as they struck the wadded bedding.

"Bring MacGregor in!" yelled Butch. "They're making it hot for us—but I'll give 'em some backfire."

The shooting outside ceased almost as suddenly as it had begun. A convict went to the dungeon door and spoke to Olsen, who was standing guard there.

"MacGregor!" he shouted. The guard walked out. The two men marched him to where Butch stood.

The little guard, a nondescript, wishy-washy who was not disliked by the men, stood trembling before Butch.

"Mac," began the convict generalissimo, "you are going to get a break—y'hear? When we open that door you go duck out an' deliver this message to the warden. Tell him we got plenty of ammunition to last us for a long time yet. That we'll die fightin', anyway. But that we want three cars outside the prison gate, with engines runnin' an' doors open. Then we want the gates opened and the way clear—clear, get me? An' if he don't we are goin' to murder every guard we got in here. First we are going to start with Wallace and he's going to sit in the hot squat. We're goin' to cook him and then pitch his carcass out—hear! Now get the hell out of here an' tell them straight—we mean business . . . Butch speaking!"

"Y-e-s," stammered MacGregor, his knees trembling.

"Yes, sir!" stormed Butch.

"Yes, sir!"

MacGregor was taken to the door, but before it was opened a white shirt was waved out the window. The little guard was shoved out into the deserted prison yard and the door closed with a wallop at his back.

"Watch him, Hawk," ordered Butch. The Hawk crawled to a window and peered out.

"He's under the Warden's window," he said. "He's looking up and telling them something . . . they've opened the door for him."

A few seconds later the "typewriter" fire started again and the Hawk fell from his observation post.

"I'm not hurt!" he cried. Then: "That's their comeback!"

"Oke!" bellowed Butch. "Drag Wallace out."

The Hawk and Dopey went for the captain of the yard.

"We'll sizzle that screw's hide," said Butch. "Here, Joe—you know somethin' about that hell plant in there. Get it ready. Mike, here's an electrician. We can work this kitchen as good as Wallace ever did."

Wallace was brought out.

"Well, well," greeted Butch, with profound irony. "Here's the Old Kid himself."

"What're you crazy hopheads going to do?" asked Wallace in a voice which still retained some of the hard tone of command.

"Do?" cried Butch. "Why, we're goin' to give you the steel throne an' fling you to them buzzards out there!"

"You'll cook yourself, Butch," muttered and stuttered Wallace, his voice trembling.

"What the hell if I do? You never worried about me before."

He stuck his gun against Wallace's belly:

"Say your prayers, Wallace—sorry, but there ain't no chaplain for you."

CHAPTER XXII

A score of men were at the barricaded windows seeking a chance to return the fire. The machine guns kept on peppering the cell house. There were several badly wounded on the floor, and although they raised their voices beseechingly, they were ignored. This was no time to attend the wounded. Several lay motionless.

Morgan could see the face of Wallace. The muscles of his jaws were working spasmodically and his eyes were burning with fever. Butch was directly beneath the tier, and Morgan could hear him giving orders as the men came and went.

Joe and Mike, who had gone to prepare the electric chair, returned.

"No juice—the dynamo's dead," said Joe. "They've cut the cables."

"Hell!" stormed Butch. Then: "Said your prayers, Wallace?"

"I don't know any prayers," returned Wallace, summoning his last volt of bravado. "Go ahead and shoot—the juice will be on for you!"

Butch answered threefold. There were three deafening shots. A groan. Butch was reloading.

"Throw the skunk out in the yard," said the killer.

While they were dragging Wallace's lifeless body across the floor, Morgan half arose and made his way cautiously along the tier until he came to the steps leading to the dungeon door. Olsen had left his post and was helping to pile mattresses against the windows. Others were busy throwing bedding down from the upper tiers. Morgan darted through the dungeon door. The lights were all out here, and only a thin shaft from the open vent illumined the landing. Halfway down the steps Morgan spied Kent, who began to creep farther down when he saw his enemy. As Morgan advanced, Kent retreated on his unsteady heels. The light above threw a fantastic shadow across the desanguinated, haggard face of Kent. Morgan was three steps above the younger man. At that instant there was a terrific blast and the



A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. *The Big House.*

MORGAN HELPING BUTCH TO HIS CELL.

prison rocked. Morgan braced himself on the other side to keep afoot. When he looked around again he saw Kent running up the steps and out the door.

Another cessation in the firing. Morgan could hear Butch.

"Keep that white flag wavin'. Now, open that door—throw him out."

They were tossing the body of Wallace into the yard! As he heard the great doors shut the firing started with new vigor, and Morgan knew the answer of the warden. He knew, too, that the ten other guards who were huddled at the bottom of the steps would go one by one—go as Wallace had gone, shot down by Butch, to whom murder was a thrill.

Morgan knew that he must act quickly. Olsen had returned to his post. He was standing with his back to the open door. He had no fear that the guards would attempt to get out, as it would mean only a speedier and surer death. Morgan crept softly up the steps. When he gained the top one, he caught Olsen beneath the armpits and swung him inside the door.

"You finkin' double-crosser!" gasped Olsen, as he half turned his head and recognized Mor-

gan. Morgan strong-armed Olsen with an elbow hook around his throat, and wrenched the gun loose with the other hand.

He cracked Olsen on the skull with the butt, and as he let him down gently, he extricated the bullets from his pocket. Then he peered out the door. He could see Butch some distance away through the smoke and haze. He stepped quickly out the door and closed it and turned the key in the lock. He pocketed the key and started to run up the steps to the second tier when he saw a figure crawling toward him.

It was Pop Riker, the old guard from the warden's office, who had been felled by a blow from Butch when the mutineers had entered the cell house. Morgan bent over him.

"Hurt bad, Pop?" he asked.

"No, but I can't walk—I'm too weak," was the febrile reply.

Morgan knew that to leave him there would mean certain death when Butch found that the other guards were safely locked in the dungeon. So he caught him beneath the arms and dragged him up the stairs to the second tier. Then he lifted the old fellow in his arms and laid him on a bunk in the first cell.

As he turned to go out, he saw, through the

smoke, a figure crouched in the back of the cell. He looked more closely and saw that it was Kent.

When Kent saw him approach, he stared at him in frozen terror, and flattened instinctively against the wall. He attempted a scream—but accomplished only a dry, noiseless wheeze. Morgan turned his back on him. He stood a moment in the doorway of the cell and looked out over the corridor below, where Butch's men were fighting their losing battle.

He knew that when the gang realized there was no chance in their desperate last stand, they would find him out and kill him. There would be no time for arguments and explanations then. Morgan decided to sell his life for what it was worth. He threw open the chamber of the pistol which he had taken from Olsen and saw that there were but three loaded shells in it.

He extracted the spent ones, reached into his pocket and drew out three others. As he slid them into the chamber, Kent, who had been watching him in mad horror, believing the gun was being loaded to shoot him, slumped to the floor, uttering strange, half-articulate animal yelps.

Morgan turned and looked down at him. Kent raised his face in supplication.

"Don't kill me!" he slobbered. "For God's sake, lay off. I swear I didn't want to squeal. They forced me. They told me they'd let me go—free—if I did. I couldn't stand it here—I was going crazy! I didn't mean to sell them out. Don't tell Butch. I didn't plant that knife on you. . . . I didn't . . ."

"You'd beg an' lie at the gates o' Judgment. I'd hate to waste a good bullet on you," sneered Morgan.

"Don't kill me! Don't, please! I didn't mean it! Oh, God, don't hurt me—Anne!—Anne! Save me! Save me!"

At the sound of her name Morgan lost all control. His face went blue with fury.

"Keep her name out of it—damn you!—or I'll shoot you with her name on your yellow lips."

Then Morgan dropped his arms helplessly. He remembered his promise to Anne. Kent, seeing him thus and realizing, with the last cunning of a man on the threshold of death, his chance, slipped past Morgan and ran out the door. Morgan did not try to stop him or follow him. "Anne"—in this tragic phan-

tasmagoria, this human idiocy of love and blood and revenge and self-preservation and slaughter and all society against a handful of anti-socials—her name! her pure, white, forgiving, faithful, Christian name!

The tears popped from his eyes. Then he laughed. It was all so dramatic, all so anti-climactic—all so sublime, all so absurd!

CHAPTER XXIII

"Haul out another guard!"

Through the bedlam of shots, yells, and splintering of glass, Morgan heard Butch's behemoth voice. The place reeked and roared with dead and dying. Morgan could hardly see for the smoke. It choked him, but he dared not cough.

"The door's locked!" Morgan heard Joe call back.

"Curtains—I guess we're cleaned up. Everybody's breezed. I wanted to get Morgan myself, though."

"Butch! Butch!" Joe was calling.

"Yeah?"

"There's Morgan—up there on the second tier."

"Morgan!"

With a delirious whoop he ran around to the steps. Morgan heard them nearing the cell.

When they were a brief distance away he said, and he meant business:

"Stay where you are, Butch!"

"I'll get you now—you——"

"Listen, Butch, you're nuts—I didn't turn you up. I can't powwow with you now—if you come a step further, I'll plug you—an' you know me."

Joe raised his gun and fired. The bullet struck the corner of the cell door, bounced like a handball, and fell at Morgan's feet. Morgan poked his hand out, took a no-time aim, exposing his face, and fired. The bullet hit Joe in the arm, and his gun dropped.

"I'm hit, Butch! He done it——"

Butch only growled. Both darted into the next cell to the one where Morgan was entrenched. Meantime, the guards outside, evidently emboldened by the lack of return of their fire, had crept up to the cell house and had tossed tear gas bombs. The fumes were beginning to mount in horizontal streaks.

Morgan stood his post at the door. Under the stress of the excitement he had reverted to type. He was now the gangster on the defensive—abysmally hard, fearless, heartless. He called to Joe, who was moaning:

"I warned you fair, Joe. I didn't rap on your gang—and I'm not goin' to take the slap for nothin'. You ain't after no sucker—lay off or I'll bump you off."

"You squealin' swine," Butch shouted. "If you stick your dome out o' that there cell door, I'll pot a slug between your cheatin' lamps."

Meantime, Pop Riker had staggered from his bunk and drew himself alongside of Morgan.

"Get back!" ordered Morgan, pushing the guard toward the bunk. But Pop Riker wouldn't be so easily quieted. He called:

"Butch, do you hear me? This is Pop Riker. I'm in the coffin with Morgan. You're wrong, Butch—Morgan didn't buzz on you. I swear it—he never rattled no tin cup——"

"You're a liar!" roared Butch in maudlin rage, "even the screws is backstoppin' the rat. Come on, Joe—I'm goin' in and clip the both of 'em—you got the guts to be in on the play?"

Morgan heard the feet of the two men scraping along the concrete floor. He jabbed out his rod and fired, "by ear." The tear gas was floating into the cells. Morgan felt his eyes burn. He heard Joe's distorted voice:

"Wait! My eyes, Butch. They got me—my eyes!"

"Gas," growled Butch. "I suck it for dessert."

"Let's get out of here," from Joe, "I'm going blind."

Morgan felt his own eyes begin to water. He heard the other two grumbling. The rarified ether of the bombs had decreased the visibility in the place. Morgan could hardly see his hand before him. But he felt his hand before him.

"I'm goin' to get Morg—I'll see him dead if that's the last thing I ever see," snarled Butch.

"Hold it, Butch," Morgan warned. He could hear Butch's labored breathing.

"You filthy, spyin', spewin'——"

Morgan pulled. At the same time the pistols of both Butch and Joe rang out. A whirl of gas almost obscured the figures of the other two men now in the door. All were firing, close range, point-blank. Morgan felt a sharp fang in his shoulder and another in his calf. He saw the great hulk of Butch flop. Joe was choking and coughing and crazily feeling for—somewhere.

"I got him! I got him!" cried Butch, squirming on the floor.

Morgan had stepped back in the cell.

"Pass me more cartridges, Joe, I want to make a good job of it," Butch blithered hoarsely. "Killin' him oncet ain't enough."

"Shut up, Butch, you've settled your pal," said Pop Riker, leaning over Morgan.

"Lemme finish him—he ain't dead yet." Butch's voice was growing weak. "I'm Butch —the Killer——"

"Shut up, you clown—it was Kent who tipped off Wallace—not Morgan—Kent! Kent!"

"What y'mean Kent?"

"Yes, Kent—he's the traitor."

Butch laughed long and loud and his laugh rattled off to a moribund gurgle in his throat.

"Kent—ha! ha!—they got Kent—riddled him like a sieve. So it was Kent. He would —that skirt, he's just the type—Kent! Wow!"

He began to drag himself into the cell.

"Where are you, Morg?" he called.

"Here, Butch, here," answered Morgan, faintly.

"Did I drill you, Morg?"

"It ain't bad, Butch—are you hurt? Lemme

see. . . . Gee, I hate to see a good guy lam—inside the gates."

"You can't nick ol' Butch—no metal can touch me—lead—or even copper! I'm glad it wasn't you what peached, Morgie. Mitt me—we're old cell mates, ain't we?"

Morgan gave him his rocking hand.

"I know, pal. You never had me pegged queer."

"Not you, buddy—not you. It was Kent. He welched an' yammered the first night, didn' he? . . . I feel funny, Morgie—I ain't Butch t'-night. What happened? It was Kent, huh? Ha-ha. . . . So you copped his frail—'at's like you, Morgie—hope you make her—tell her about me—Butch, the Killer—sometimes, huh? Sometimes? Some——"

The fishy claw of the one-time killer fell away, finger by finger.

CHAPTER XXIV

Two weeks after the break led and lost by Butch, Morgan stood before Warden James Adams. The official was busy signing some papers, and Morgan stood at attention for moments. His arm was slung up, his body was stiff with casts, but he was in no serious danger. He had spent ten days in the hospital—the hospital whence he had "taken the gate" once.

Finally the Warden looked up.

"I sent for you, Morgan, to give you this," he said.

He handed Morgan a document headed:

"PARDON. Know all men by these——"

Morgan nearly fell over frontward.

"But—but—" he stammered.

"It means that the Governor, at my request, has granted you a complete pardon. You are a free man, my boy. *Free!*"

Warden Adams walked from behind his desk and grasped Morgan by the hand. Then he sermonized in a stern voice:

"Morgan, I want to personally thank you for saving the lives of those ten guards—especially of Pop Riker. You are now going out into a world which has been apprised through the newspapers of your heroism, but into a world which quickly forgets your white acts and never forgets your black deeds. You will always be an ex-convict. Every dubious move you make will cause people to wag their heads and say, 'What more can you expect of a man just out of the big house?' It is hard for me to say these things to you, but I feel my duty. Don't think that life is going to be rosy. Before, when you left prison by the wrong gate you went back to the old gang and you fell in with the ways that brought you in here and twice back here. I expected it. But I trust now that you are going straight."

"Yes, sir," said Morgan in a touched but determined voice. Then: "When can I leave, then, sir?"

"You are a free man now. But you are entitled to a suit of civilian clothes. They are waiting for you. Also," he reached into his

pocket, "one of the morning newspapers has asked me to give you this check for forty-two hundred and eighty dollars. It is money raised by the readers to reward your bravery and loyalty."

Morgan was too overcome to answer.

Morgan was soon on the train for the city, the gray walls of the prison behind him—forever, he knew. His first thought was of Anne. He went at once to the bookstore.

When he arrived there he found her busily engaged in unpacking some books. The minute she saw him she dropped an armful and rushed toward him.

"John!"

"Anne!"

"I'm free—free!"

"I don't think I deserve all this happiness, John," she wept, flinging her arms around his neck. Then she was sorry.

"You poor boy—all shot up—but I'll get you well."

Morgan told her the whole story of the riot, and the only part that he faked was about Kent.

"Kent was caught in circumstances," he said. "He had no part in the rioting, but was forced

into the cell house. He was a good lad, and the Warden thought a lot of him—he was a good prisoner. He wasn't cut out for it, but he qualified——"

"Yes?" and Anne raised her eyebrows quizzically. "Don't palliate his crimes, John," she said simply. "I have been following the newspapers carefully, and with all due confidence in your story, which I am sure is told in double charity, I know that Kent was one of the prime factors in the riot. I feel sorry for his folks—I never became one of them—thank God—and——"

"Anyway, I always liked Kent—he was a pitiful kid," insisted Morgan.

"Let's talk of something else," interrupted Anne.

"What shall we talk about? We are too happy for words," laughed Morgan.

"That's when I talk the most—when I'm happy."

"How's the book business?"

"Terrible, since my best customer left."

"Is he back now?"

Morgan arose and began to look over the books.

"What would you like?" asked Anne in a mock professional tone.

"Something on foreign countries——"

"Hawaii?"

"That's it!"

"I'm sorry, Mister, but I haven't got a thing on the Hawaiian Islands—I have some ordered."

Morgan caught her in his one good arm.

"Then, dearest," he said, "we'll have to go there and find out for ourselves, as long as there's no books to be had on the subject."

"When?" anxiously asked Anne.

"Last time I came after you I lost no time, did I?"

"But they stopped you!"

"I had no papers—now I've got one—to-morrow I'll have two—you're fifty-fifty on both."

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